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ROOKWOOD:

A ROMANCE.

I see how Ruin, with a palsied hand,
Begins to shake our ancient house to dust.
YORKSHIRE TRAGEDY.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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ROOKWOOD.

BOOK I.

CONTINUED.

BOOK THE FIRST.

CHAPTER XII.

We're sorry
His violent act has e'en drawn blood of honour,
And stained our honours;
Thrown ink upon the forehead of our fame,
Which envious spirits will dip their pens into
After our death, and blot us in our tombs;
For that which would seem treason in our lives,
Is laughter when we're dead. Who dares now whisper,
That dares not then speak out: and even proclaim,
With loud words, and broad pens, our closest shame?

THE REVENGER'S TRAGEDY.

STERN, indeed, must that bosom be—insensible, beyond even callous humanity, that would not thrill with gladness at the sight of a long absent child. As tenderly as it was in her iron nature to do, did Lady Rookwood love her son. Her love was the stronger, perchance, in that if aught she loved, 'twas him, and him alone—

all else she hated. In him all her affection was concentered—for him, no sacrifice was too great—for his worldly weal she would have braved eternal perdition. And now, at an unlooked-for moment, when she deemed him absent in a foreign land—when his return was what she wished for most—what she would have prayed for, had she prayed for aught—he stood before her; in her hour of peril, and distress, his succouring arm was upraised to defend her. Her son was with her;—her enemy—*his* enemy, within her grasp. Triumph flashed within her eye, and her heart exulted. For one instant she had gazed doubtfully upon his face—her frame shaking with emotion. Spirits, she had heard, have wandered near their fleshly tabernacles at such hours as these, and the features seemed so like his father's, that she scarce knew what construction to put upon the apparition she beheld. The doubt was of momentary duration. The next instant saw her in the attitude we have attempted to describe.

With that quickness of perception, which at once supplies information on such an emergency, Luke instantly conjectured who was before him. Startled as he was, he yet retained his composure, abiding the result, with his arms folded upon his breast.

"Seize him," cried Lady Rookwood, so soon as she could command her speech.

"He rushes on his death—if he but stir," exclaimed Luke, pointing his pistol; "and you, his mother, shall answer for his life. He is unarmed—he cannot cope with me."

"Bethink you where you are, villain?" cried Ranulph; "you are entrapped in your own toils. Submit yourself to our mercy—resistance is vain, and will not secure your safety, while it will aggravate your offence. Surrender yourself——"

"Never," answered Luke: "know you whom you ask to yield?"

"How should I?" answered Ranulph.

"By that instinct which tells me who *you* are. Ask *her*—she can inform you, if she will."

"A villain—an impostor," returned Lady Rookwood. "Parley not with him—seize him, at all hazards—his life is our life. He is a robber, a murderer, who has assailed my life."

"Beware," cried Luke to Ranulph, who was preparing to obey his mother's commands—"I am no impostor—no robber—no murderer—my soul is free from stain of guilt like that, though I have many offences to answer for. Do not thou make me a fratricide."

"Fratricide!" echoed Ranulph, recoiling.

"Ay, *fratricide*, in our dead father's presence."

"Heed him not," ejaculated Lady Rookwood. "It is false—he dares not harm thee, for his soul—I will call assistance."

"Hold, mother!" exclaimed Ranulph, detaining Lady Rookwood; "this man may be

what he represents himself. Before we proceed to extremities I would question him. I would not have mentioned it in your hearing, could it have been avoided, but my father had a son."

Lady Rookwood frowned. She would have checked him, but Luke rejoined—

"You have spoken the truth, "he had a son —I am he—I——"

"Be silent, I command you," vociferated Lady Rookwood.

"Silent!" cried Luke, in a loud voice, "Why should I be silent at your bidding—at *your's*—who regard no laws, human or divine; who pursue your own fell purposes, without fear of God or man. Waste not your frowns on me—I heed them not. Death! Do you think I am like a tame hound, to be cowed to silence? I *will* speak. Ranulph Rookwood, the name you bear is mine, and by a right as good as is your own. From his loins, who lies a corpse before us, I sprang. No brand of shame is on my birth. I am his son —his lawfully begotten—his first-born—your

brother—your *elder* brother. To me pertains all you now call your own. Nay, glance not at me so. Threaten me not. Hear me. I say not this to taunt you. I assert no falsehood. I avouch the truth. You bade me think within whose presence I stood; bring that thought home to yourself, for by that awful form, I swear—I would call the dead to witness the oath. Ha! do you heed me now," continued Luke, observing the shuddering effect which this last appeal produced on Ranulph. "Yes," cried he, rushing towards the bier, "here lies he, within his coffin, cold and dead, who through life deserted me. What if he could arise, and speak for me—what, if the light of life could animate those senseless orbs? I cannot look upon those features, still and stern, without fear and trembling. What if, even as they are, the spirit of existence should return, and he could speak for me? Then might the living tremble at the tale he could tell. Hear me! By this body, my *father's* body, I swear that I am his son—his

legitimate—his first-born; and though to me he hath never been, what to a son a father should be; though I have never known his smile, never felt his caresses, never received his blessing, yet now be all forgiven, all forgotten." And he cast himself, with frantic violence, upon the coffin!

It is difficult to describe the feelings with which Ranulph heard the avowal conveyed by Luke's passionate words. Amazement and dread predominated. Coupling the fearful scene now before his eyes, with the remembrance of the phantasm he imagined he had beheld, he listened to Luke's adjuration with a sensation that made his flesh creep upon his bones. His worst fears seemed to be realized, and in a manner as appalling, and almost as preternatural, as the vision itself. Unable to move, he stood gazing on in silence. Not so Lady Rookwood. The moment for action was arrived. Yet even she had some doubts about the line of conduct most prudent to be pursued. Luke was in her power. Should she summon the

household—proclaim him a lunatic—a robber—an assailant—imprison him—or drive him from the house? All, or any of these expedients, she might have recourse to; but none were unattended by danger, or difficulty. She must do this to secure him. Her retainers were still faithful to her: of that, Ranulph's presence assured her; as she at once saw her mistake in attributing to Luke's situation the chance expressions she had overheard, and which had alarmed her so much at the moment, when they so evidently applied to her son's unexpected return. On their fidelity she could therefore depend. With all these aids—with a certainty of securing him—the task was nevertheless not without hazard, and might endanger all, nay, advance the cause she would fain defeat. This Lady Rookwood felt. Luke was fearless—eloquent—desperate; he might sell his life dearly; but *that* weighed little with her, if he were slain: on the other hand, he might escape—he might be taken with life—his defence might be so gallant as to

produce a strong impression in his favour; he might, she was sure he would, blazon forth his story; and that, at this season, when all the neighbourhood, and perchance his friends amongst the number, were assembled, was a scandal she could not brook. Her eye rolled inwardly, as these thoughts swept darkly across her brain. Suddenly she became tranquil. There is a calm within the storm, more to be dreaded than the whirlwind's self. Addressing her son, she said, in a hollow voice——

"You have heard what he says?"

"I have;" answered he, mournfully.

"And you believe him?"

"I can scarce do otherwise. Compare his assertions with what my father, himself, declared to me, before my departure from England. You may remember it. You spoke of the entailment of the lands of Rookwood, averring them to be mine unalienably. Have you forgotten his reply?"

"No," answered Lady Rookwood; "I have

not forgotten it; but I will baulk his designs. And now," added she in a whisper, "thy prey is within thy power. Attack him——"

"Wherefore," answered Ranulph; "if he be my brother, shall I raise my hand against him?"

"Wherefore not?" returned Lady Rookwood.

"'Twere an accursed deed," replied Ranulph. "The mystery is solved. 'Twas for this that I was summoned home."

"Ha! what sayest thou?—summoned?"

"Who summoned thee?"

"My father!"

"Thy father?" echoed Lady Rookwood, in great surprise.

"Ay, my dead father! He hath appeared to me since his decease; nay, on the moment when his spirit departed, to bid me return; why, I knew not. The doubt is now made clear."

"Ranulph, you rave—you are distracted with grief—with astonishment."

"No, mother; he was in the right. The dead

will witness for him. I will not struggle against my destiny.

"Destiny! ha—craven—dastard—thou art not my son; not the child of Maude Rookwood; no offspring of her's would utter such a word. Destiny! ha—ha—thy destiny is Rookwood, its manors, its land, its rent-roll, and its title; nor shalt thou yield it to a base-born churl like this. Let him prove his rights. Let him obtain them. Let the law adjudge them to him, and we will yield—will cease to struggle—but not till then. But I tell thee he has *not* the right, nor can he maintain it. He is a deluded dreamer, who, having heard some idle tale of his birth, believes, because it chimes with his wishes, and now asserts it. He told it me. I treated it with the scorn it deserved. I would have driven him from my presence, but he was armed, as thou seest, and forced me hither, perhaps to murder me; a deed he might have accomplished, had it not been for thy intervention. His life is already forfeit, for an attempt of the same sort last night. Why else came he hither? for what

else did he drag me to this spot? Let him answer that!"

"I will answer it," replied Luke, raising himself from the bier; his face was of an ashy paleness, and ghastly as the corpse over which he leaned. "I had a deed to do, which I wished you to witness. It was a wild conception; but the means whereby I have acquired the information of my rights, was wild—we are both the slaves of inevitable necessity. Thou hast received thy summons hither—I have had mine. Thy father's ghost called thee; my mother's spectral hand beckoned me. Both are arrived. One thing more remains, and my mission is completed." Saying which, he drew forth the skeleton hand; and having first taken the wedding ring from the finger and secured it, he placed the withered limb upon the left breast of his father's body. "Rest there," he cried, "for ever."

"Will you suffer that?" said Lady Rookwood, tauntingly, to her son.

"No," replied Ranulph; "such profana-

tion of the dead shall not be endured, were he ten times my brother. Stand aside," added he, advancing towards the bier, and motioning Luke away. "Withdraw your hand from my father's body, and remove what you have placed upon it."

"I will neither remove it, nor suffer it to be removed;" returned Luke. "'Twas for that purpose I came hither. 'Twas to that hand in life he was united, in death shall he not be divided from it!"

"Hear him," cried Lady Rookwood.

"Such irreverence shall not be;" exclaimed Ranulph, seizing Luke with one hand, and snatching at the sere-clothes with the other. "Remove it, or by heaven——"

"Leave go your hold," said Luke, in a voice of thunder; "you strive in vain." Ranulph ineffectually attempted to push him backwards; and shaking away the grasp that was fixed upon his collar, seized his brother's wrist, so as to prevent the accomplishment of his purpose. In

this unnatural and indecorous strife, the corpse of their father was reft of its covering, and the hand discovered lying upon the pallid breast.

And as if the wanton impiety of their conduct called forth an immediate rebuke, even from the dead, a frown seemed to pass over their father's features, as their angry glances fell in that direction. This appalling effect was solely occasioned by Lady Rookwood's approach, her shadow falling over the brow and visage of the deceased, produced the appearance we have noticed. Simultaneously quitting each other, with a deep sense of shame, mingled with remorse, both remained, with eyes fixed upon the dead, whose repose they had violated.

Folding the grave-clothes decently over the body, Luke prepared to depart.

"Hold!" cried Lady Rookwood; "you go not hence."

"Indeed!" replied Luke. "My brother, Ranulph, will not oppose my departure. Who else shall prevent it?"

"That will I," cried a voice behind him; and, ere he could turn to ascertain from whom the exclamation proceeded, Luke felt himself grappled by two nervous assailants, who, snatching the pistol from his hold, fast pinioned his arms. This was scarce the work of a moment, and he was a prisoner, before he could offer any resistance. A strong smile of exultation evinced Lady Rookwood's satisfaction.

"Bravo, my lads, bravo!" cried Coates, stepping forward, for he it was under whose skilful superintendence the seizure had been effected: "famously managed; the best Bow-Street runners couldn't have done it better—capital—hand me that pistol—loaded, I see—slugs, no doubt—oh, he's a precious rascal—search him—that's right—turn his pockets inside out, while I speak to her Ladyship." Saying which, the little Attorney, enchanted with the feat he had performed, approached Lady Rookwood with a profound bow, and an amazing smirk of self-satisfaction. "Just in time to prevent mischief,"

said he; "hope your Ladyship does not suffer any inconvenience from the alarm—beg pardon, annoyance I meant to say, which this daring outrage must have occasioned; excessively disagreeable this sort of thing, to a lady, at any time, but at a period like this more than usually provoking. However, we have him safe enough now, at your Ladyship's disposal. Very lucky I happened to be in the way—smelt a rat in the hall. Perhaps your Ladyship would like to know how I discovered—"

"Not now," replied Lady Rookwood, checking the volubility of the man of law. "I thank you most heartily, Mr. Coates, for the service you have rendered me; you will now add materially to the obligation already conferred upon me, by removing the prisoner with all convenient dispatch."

"Certainly, if your Ladyship wishes it. Shall I detain him a close prisoner in the hall for to-night, or remove him, at once, to the roundhouse?"

"Where you please, so you do it quickly," replied Lady Rookwood, noticing, with great uneasiness, the agitated manner of her son, and apprehensive, lest, in the presence of so many witnesses, he might say or do something prejudicial to their cause. Nor were her fears groundless. As Coates was about to return to the prisoner, he was arrested by the voice of Ranulph, commanding him to stay.

"Mr. Coates," said he, "however appearances may be against this man, he is no robber—you must, therefore, release him."

"Release him, Sir Ranulph?"

"Yes, Sir; I tell you he came here neither to rob, nor to offer violence."

"That is false, Ranulph," replied Lady Rookwood. "I was dragged hither by him, at the peril of my life. He is Mr. Coates's prisoner, on another charge."

"Unquestionably, your Ladyship is perfectly right; I have a warrant against him, for assault-

ing Hugh Badger, the keeper, and for other misdemesnors."

"I will myself be responsible for his appearance to that charge," replied Ranulph. "Now, Sir, at once, release him."

"At your peril," exclaimed Lady Rookwood.

"Well, really," muttered the perplexed Attorney, "this is the most unaccountable proceeding I ever witnessed."

"Ranulph," said Lady Rookwood sternly to her son, "Beware how you thwart me."

"Yes, Sir Ranulph, let me venture to advise you, as a friend, not to thwart her Ladyship," interposed the Attorney; "indeed she is in the right:" but seeing his advice unheeded, he withdrew to a little distance.

"I will not see injustice done to my father's son," replied Ranulph, in a low tone. "Why would you detain him?"

"Why?" returned she: "our safety demands it—our honour."

"Our honour demands his instant liberation; each moment that he remains in those bonds, tends to our dishonour—I will free him myself from his fetters."

"And brave my curse, foolish boy? You incurred your miserable father's anathema for a lighter cause than this. Our honour—thy honour—my honour, cries aloud for his destruction. Have I not been injured in the nicest point that a woman can be injured? Thinkest thou I could have wedded Sir Piers Rookwood, had I known aught of this marriage; still more, had I dreamed there had been offspring born of it? Have I not been duped? Hast thou not been duped? Shall I lend my name to mockery and scorn, by base acknowledgment of such deceit, or wilt thou? Where would be my honour then? Stripped of my fair estates—my son—myself—beggars—dependent on the bounty of him. Does honour ask thee to bear this? It is a phantom sense of honour, unsubstantial

as thy father's shade, thou speakest of, that would prompt thee otherwise."

"Do not evoke his awful spirit, mother," cried Ranulph, with a shudder; "do not arouse his wrath."

"Do not arouse *my* wrath," returned Lady Rookwood. "I am the more to be feared. Think of Eleanor Mowbray—the bar between your nuptials is removed. Would you raise up a greater impediment?"

"Mother! mother!"

"Would you tamely suffer this new-sprung claimant, whom you know not, nor have ever seen, to wrest from you your inheritance, without a struggle? Without Rookwood, I tell you, Eleanor never will be your's—thus much I know of Mrs. Mowbray. Even there he may supplant you—nay, I speak not at random. Let him be in possession, and abide the consequences—he is now in our power. He will rot in gaol, or be driven from this country. Speak the word, will

you raise up this giant in your path, or crush him, yet ungrown? Elect—choose between him and me."

"Mother—"

"Nay, hear me yet further. Our cause is a righteous one. I have been deceived—thou art deceived. Great wrong hath been done to both. We are warranted by Holy Writ, in such a cause, to have recourse to stratagem. Like Esau, he hath lost his birthright; and even as Rachel did unto Jacob, so will I do to thee. I will make thee the elder—the ruler of thy brother, and of his house."

"But if he be my brother, and if this house be his house, I should sin before heaven to withhold it from him—I will not do it. Your own words betray your conviction of his rights."

"My *conviction!* Ranulph, thou turnest my head to hear thee talk thus. What to me is conviction or doubt? The line of action is plain: let him prove his right, it will then be time enough to succumb. Meanwhile, be he

what he may, give him not this advantage—he is now in our power. He hath committed an offence against the laws of his country, which will place his liberty, if not his life, in jeopardy; let him first *disprove* that. Once for all, I tell thee, were he thrice thy father's son, he cannot prove the fact of his mother's marriage. And well he cannot. Were it fitting that the son of a low-born village wench should usurp the titles of the offspring of her who hath borne the name of D'Aubeney—a name which was, methinks, degraded, in merging itself in thine own? Do as thou wilt—act as thou deemest best—gain a brother, if thou seest fitting, and lose thine all—and with thine all, thy mother. Decide quickly—all eyes are directed upon us. The room is now filled with the household—the tenantry—the guests. Proclaim, if you choose, before all, your own degradation—your nothingness, and his elevation—*his*——And here let us part for ever."

"Enough mother—more than enough—you

have decided, though not convinced me. Detain him within the house, if you will, until the morrow. In the mean time, I will consider over my line of conduct."

"Is this, then, thy resolve?"

"It is. Mr. Coates," said Ranulph, calling the Attorney, who had been an inquisitive spectator, though, luckily, not an auditor of this interview. "Unbind the prisoner, and bring him hither."

"Is it your Ladyship's pleasure?" asked Mr. Coates, who regretted exceedingly that he could not please both parties.

Lady Rookwood signified her assent by a slight bow.

"Your bidding shall be done, Sir Ranulph," said Coates, departing.

"*Sir Ranulph!*" echoed Lady Rookwood, with strong emphasis; "mark'd you that?"

"Well, well," muttered the Attorney—"this is the most extraordinary family to be sure. Make way, gentlemen, if you please," added he,

pushing his way through the crowd, toward the prisoner.

Having described what took place between Lady Rookwood and her son in one part of the room, we must now, briefly, narrate some incidental occurrences in the other. The alarm of a robber having been taken, spread with great rapidity through the house, and almost all its inmates rushed into the room, including Doctor Small, Titus Tyrconnel, and Jack Palmer.

"Are you there, honey?" said Titus, who discovered his ally, "the bird's caught, you see."

"Caught be d—d," replied Jack, bluffly—"so I see—all his own fault; infernal folly to come here, at such a time as this. What's it all for, I'd like to know? cursed nonsense. However, it can't be helped now; he must make the best of it. And as to that sneaking, gimlet-eyed, parchment-skinned, quill-driver, if I don't serve him out for his officiousness, one of these days, my name's not Jack Palmer."

"Och, cushlamacree, did I ever—why what the devil's the boy to you, Jack? fair play's a jewel, and surely Mr. Coates only did his duty. I'm sorry he's catched, for his relationship to Sir Piers, because I think he'll be tucked up for his pains; and, moreover, I could forgive the poaching; but as to the breaking into a house, on such an occasion as this, och! it's a plaguy bad look. I'm afraid he's worse than I expected."

"Bah!" returned Jack, shrugging his shoulders.

"Is this Luke Bradley," asked Small, "the unfortunate son of Sir Piers?"

"The same, Dochtor," replied Titus; "there's no doubt of his genealogy, if you look at him."

"Unquestionably not," returned Small—"old Sir Reginald Rookwood, who is looking at us from out that picture, might well father that fierce face."

A group of the tenantry, many of them in a state of intoxication, had, in the meantime, formed themselves round the prisoner. What-

ever might be the nature of his thoughts, no apprehension was visible in Luke's countenance. He stood erect, amidst the assemblage, his tall form towering above them all, and his eyes fixed upon the movements of Lady Rookwood and her son. He had perceived the anguish of the latter, and the vehemence of the former, attributing both to their real causes. The taunts and jeers, threats, and insolent inquiries, from the hinds, that thronged around him, passed unheeded; yet one voice in his ear, sharp as the sting of a serpent, made him start. It was that of the Sexton.

"You have done well," said Peter, "have you not? Your fetters are, I hope, to your liking. Well! a wilful man must have his own way, and perhaps the next time, you will be content to follow my advice. You must now free yourself, the best way you can, from these Moabites, and I promise you it will be no easy matter. Ha, ha!"

Peter withdrew into the crowd; and Luke, vainly endeavouring to discover his retreating

figure, caught the eye of Jack Palmer fixed upon himself, with a peculiar and very significant expression.

At this moment Mr. Coates made his appearance.

"Bring along the prisoner," said the man of law to his two assistants; and Luke was accordingly hurried along, Mr. Coates using his best efforts to keep back the crowd. It was during the pressure that Luke heard a voice whisper in his ear, "Never fear, all's right;" and turning his head, became aware of the close vicinity of Jack Palmer. The latter elevated his eyebrows with a gesture of silence, and Luke passed on, as if nothing had occurred. He was presently confronted with Lady Rookwood and her son; and, notwithstanding the efforts of Mr. Coates, seconded by some few others, the crowd grew dense around them.

"Remove his fetters," said Ranulph, and his manacles were removed.

"You will consent to remain here a prisoner, till to-morrow?"

"I consent to nothing," replied Luke; "I am in your hands."

"He does not deserve your clemency, Sir Ranulph," interposed Coates.

"Let him take his own course," said Lady Rookwood; "he will reap the benefit of it anon."

"Will you pledge yourself not to depart?" asked Ranulph.

"Of course," cried the Attorney; "to be sure he will. Ha, ha!"

"I will pledge nothing," returned Luke. "Detain me, at your proper peril."

"Better and better," exclaimed the Attorney. "This is the highest joke I ever heard of."

"I shall detain you then, in custody, until proper inquiries can be made," said Ranulph. "To your care, Mr. Coates, and to that of Mr. Tyrconnel, whom I must request to lend you

his assistance, I commit the charge; and I must further request, that you will show him every attention which his situation will permit. Remove him. We have a sacred duty to the dead to fulfil, to which, even justice to the living must give way. Disperse this crowd, and let instant preparations be made for the completion of the ceremonial. You understand me, Sir."

"Ranulph Rookwood," said Luke, sternly, as he departed, "thou hast another—a more sacred office, to perform. Fulfil thy duty to thy father's son."

"Away with him," cried Lady Rookwood. "I am out of all patience with this trifling. Follow me to my chamber," added she to her son, passing towards the door. The concourse of spectators, who had listened to this extraordinary scene in astonishment, greatly admiring the clemency of Ranulph, made way for her instantly, and she left the room, accompanied by her son. The prisoner was led out by the other door.

"Botheration!" cried Titus, to Mr. Coates, as they followed in the wake—"Why did he choose out me? I'll lose the funeral, entirely, by his arrangement."

"That you will," replied Palmer. "Shall I be your deputy?"

"No, no," returned Coates. "I will have no other than Mr. Tyrconnel. It was Sir Ranulph's express wish."

"That's the devil of it," returned Titus; "and I, that was to have been chief mourner, and have made all the preparations, am to be left out. I wish Sir Ranulph had stay'd till to-morrow—what could bring him here, to spile all—it's cursedly provoking."

"Cursed provoking," echoed Jack.

"But then there's no help, so I must make the best of it," returned the good-humoured Irishman.

"There's a spare room that I know of," said the Attorney, "in the lower gallery of the eastern wing, with never a window, and a com-

fortable anti-chamber. There we'll dispose of the prisoner, and keep watch in the front room ourselves; and what with a bowl of punch, and a yard or two of clay, we'll contrive to get through the night tidily, never fear. As to the keeping him *here*, it's all nonsense; but there's something in it all that I can't fathom. We shall see what to-morrow will bring forth."

"Ay," replied Jack, with a meaning smile, "to-morrow ——"

END OF BOOK THE FIRST.

BOOK II.

The Sexton.

Duchess.—Thou art very plain.
Bosola.—My trade is to flatter the dead, not the living—
I am a tomb-maker.

WEBSTER.

BOOK THE SECOND.

CHAPTER I.

Come, list, and hark! the bell doth towle
For some but now departing sowle!
And was not that some ominous fowle?
The bat, the night crow, or screech owle?
To these I hear the wild wolfe howle,
In this dark night that seems to scowle;—
All these my black-booke shall enrowle.
For hark! still hark! the bell doth towle
For some but new-departed sowle!

HEYWOOD—RAPE OF LUCRECE.

THE night was wild and stormy. The day had been sultry, with a lurid, metallic-looking sky, hanging, like a vast galvanic plate, over the face of nature. As evening drew on, every

thing betokened the coming tempest. Unerring indications of its approach were noted by the weatherwise at the Hall. The swallow was seen to skim the surface of the pool so closely, that he ruffled its mirrored bosom as he passed; and then, sharply darting round and round, with twittering scream, he winged his rapid flight to his clay-built home, beneath the barn-eaves. The kine that had herded to the muddied margin of the water, and had sought, by splashing, to relieve themselves from the keen persecution of their myriad insect tormentors, wended stallwards, undriven, and deeply lowing. The deer, that at twilight had trooped thither also for refreshment, suddenly "with expanded nostrils, snuffed the air," and bounded off to their coverts, amidst the sheltering fern-brake. The rooks, "obstreperous of wing, in crowds combined," cawed in a way that, as plainly as words could have done, bespoke their apprehension: they were seen, some hovering and beating the air with flapping pinion, others

shooting upwards in mid space, as if to reconnoitre the weather, while others, again, were croaking to their mates, in loud discordant tone, from the highest branches of the lime trees; all, seemingly, as anxious and as busy as mariners before a gale of wind.

At sunset, the hazy vapours, which had obscured the horizon throughout the day, rose up in spiral volumes, like smoke from a burning forest, and, becoming gradually condensed, assumed the form of huge, billowy masses, which, reflecting the sun light, changed, as the sinking orb declined, from purple to flame colour, and thence to ashy, angry grey. Night rushed onwards, like a sable steed. There was a dead calm. The stillness was undisturbed, save by an intermittent, sighing wind, which, hollow as a murmur from the grave, died as it arose. At once the clouds turned to an inky blackness. A single, sharp, intensely vivid flash, shot from the bosom of the rack, sheer downwards, and struck the earth with a report

like that of a piece of ordnance. In ten minutes it was dunnest night, and a rattling thunder-storm.

A thunder-storm by night! What spectacle is there so magnificently beautiful—so awful—so sublime? Is there aught we can look upon, that can awaken similar feelings of terror—of admiration? Dreadful by day—night is the fitting season to behold it in all its grandeur—in all its terrible beauty. The face of heaven is shrouded, as with a pall. The darkness is almost palpable—a breath can scarce be drawn; suddenly the sight is stricken with a broad, dazzling sheet of flame, rending asunder the tenebrous shroud, and illumining the dense cope of heaven. 'Tis gone! Darkness relieves the aching vision—darkness made more intense by the contrast. Hark! the skies resound with the loud, reverberating roar of heaven's artillery, echoing from cloud to cloud, and seeming, like the voice of the Eternal, to shake the firmament to its foundation. Lo! the vexed air is scathed

with forked flashes, each succeeding the other, so fast that the eye is unable to follow their thwart course. Again, 'tis night—again the thunder peals. Such a storm it was once our fate to witness, belated amongst the Eastern Appenines, on our way from Rome to Terni. Having descended the castellated heights of Narni, we were speeding along a valley, thick with chestnut trees, and hemmed in by mountains on either side, when night and the storm overtook us. We had perceived some symptoms of the coming elemental strife at Narni, but thought we might reach our destination ere its outbreak; and with this hope we urged our course onwards. We were deceived. He who thinks to fly before a storm, amidst those regions, will reckon without his host. We were in the thick of it. Night fell—the tempest arose. The thunder roared—the lightning blazed —we were involved in an atmosphere of flame. The lightning could be seen, even with eyes closed. The tree-leaves rustled in the wind—

the mountain sides returned the thunder's bray. All around was blinding light, or pitchy gloom. Still we dashed on, through darkness, or through fire. Our offers of a liberal *buono-mano* were not unheeded by the postillion who drove us, and he kept his way in gallant style. Now were he and his horses utterly lost in the black void —now we beheld him bolt upright in his stirrups, crossing himself, whirling his whip round his head, or screaming, at the top of his voice, to the drivers of the innumerable wains that impeded our progress. Despite all these, and other risks, we reached Terni in safety, by no means indisposed to exchange our well-windowed britschka, which appeared, at that time, to have more attraction for the electric fluid than for ourselves, for the *albergo*, to which it had served as conductor.

Upon finishing this ride, we were convinced that a thunder-storm is the finest of all possible sights, when seen at a distance; but to be actually exposed to its fury, is another question.

Grand it is, undoubtedly; but the sense of instant imminent danger, that will, in spite of every effort, suggest itself, and the force and distinctness with which every fatal casualty of the kind, with all its circumstances, will intrude itself upon the imagination, renders one painfully alive to the sublimity of the scene. Terror destroys delight; and we could well barter admiration for assurance of security.

To return to our tale: The progress of the storm was watched with infinite apprehension, by the crowd of tenantry assembled in the great hall; and loud and frequent were the ejaculations uttered, as each succeeding peal of thunder burst over their heads. There was, however, one amongst the assemblage, who seemed to enjoy the uproar; a kindred excitement appeared to blaze in his glances, as he looked upon the storm without. This was Peter Bradley. He stood close by the window, and shaded not his eyes, even before the fiercest flashes. A grin of unnatural exhilaration played upon his features,

and he seemed to exult in, and to court, the tempestuous horrors, which affected the most hardy amongst his companions with consternation, and made all shrink trembling into the recesses of the room. Peter's conduct was not unobserved, nor his reputation for unholy dealing unremembered. To some he was almost as much an object of dread as the storm itself.

"Did'st ever see the like o' that?" said Farmer Burtenshaw, whose round, honest face, good wine had recently empurpled, but fear had now mottled white, addressing his neighbour; "Didst ever hear of any man that were a Christian, laughing in the very face o' a thunner-storm, with the lightnin' fit to put out his eyes, and the rattle above ready to break the drums o' his ears? I always thought Peter Bradley was not exactly what he should be, and now I'm sure on it."

"For my part, I think, neighbour Burtenshaw," returned the other, "that this great burst of weather's all of his raising, for in all my

nat'ral life I never seed such a hurly-burly, and never hope to see such again. I've heard my grandfather tell of folk as could command wind and rain; and, belike, Peter may have the power—we all do know he can do more nor any other man."

"We all do know, at all events," replied Burtenshaw, "that he do live like no other man—that he do spend night after night by himself in that dreary church-yard—that he do keep no living thing, except an old terrier dog, in his crazy cottage; and that he never axes nobody into his house from one year's end to another. I've never cross'd his threshold these twenty years. But," continued he, mysteriously, "I happened to pass the house one dark, dismal night, and there what do'st think I seed through the window?"

"What—what did'st see?"

"Peter Bradley sitting with a great book open on his knees; it were a Bible, I think, and he crying like a child."

"Cryin'! Art sure o' that?"

"The tears were falling fast upon the leaves," returned Burtenshaw; "but when I knocked at the door, Peter hastily shut up the book, and ordered me, in a surly tone, to be gone."

"I thought no tear had ever dropped from his eye," said the other. "Why he laughed outright when his poor wife died; and when his daughter, Susan, went off at the Hall, folks said he received hush-money, to say nought about it. *That* were a bad business any how; and now that his grandson, Luke, be taken in the fact of house-breaking, he minds it no more, not he, than if nothing had happened."

"Don't be too sure of that," replied Burtenshaw; "he may be scheming summat all this time. Well, I've known Peter Bradley now these two and fifty years, and, excepting that one night, I never saw any good about him, and never heard of nobody who could tell who he be, or where he do come from."

"One thing's certain, at least," replied the other farmer—"he were never born at Rookwood. How he came here the devil only knows; hark! what a crash!—this storm be all of his raising I tell 'ee."

"He be—what he certainly will be," interposed another speaker, in a louder tone, and with less of apprehension in his manner than his comrade, probably from his nerves being better fortified with strong liquor. "Dost thou think, Sammul Plant, as how Providence would entrust the like o' him with the command of the elements? No—no, it's rank blasphemy to suppose such a thing, and I've too much of the true Catholic and Apostate Church about me, to stand by and hear that stated."

"May be, then, he gets his power from Sathan," replied Plant; "no man else could go on as he does—only look at him. He seems to be watching for the thunder-bowt."

"I wish he may catch it, then," returned the other.

"That's an evil wish, Simon Toft, and thou may'st repent it."

"Repent it! not I," retorted Toft; "it would be a good clearance to th' neighbourhood, to get rid o' th' old croaking curmudgeon."

Whether or not Peter overheard the conversation, we pretend not to say, but at that moment a blaze of lightning showed him staring towards the group.

"As I live, he's overheard you, Simon," exclaimed Plant; "I wouldn't be in your skin for a trifle."

"Nor I," said Burtenshaw.

"Let him overhear," answered Toft; "who cares? he shall hear summat worth listening to. I'm not afraid o' him or his arts, were they as black as Lucifer's own; and to show you I'm not, I'll go and have a crack with him on the spot."

"Thou'rt a fool for thy pains, if thou dost, friend Toft," returned Plant, "that's all I can say."

"Be advised by me, and stay here," seconded Burtenshaw.

But Toft would not be advised—

> "Kings may be blest, but he was glorious,
> O'er all the ills of life victorious."

Staggering up to Peter, he laid a hard grasp upon his shoulder, and thus forcibly soliciting his attention, burst into a loud horse laugh.

But Peter was, or affected to be, too much occupied to look at him.

"What dost see man, that thou starest so?"

"It comes, it comes—the rain—the rain—a torrent—a deluge—ha, ha! Blessed is the corpse the rain rains on. Sir Piers may be drenched through his leaden covering, by such a downfall as that—splash, splash—fire and water and thunder—all together—is not that fine?—ha, ha! The heavens will weep for him, though friends shed not a tear. When did a great man's heir feel sympathy for his sire's departure? When did his widow mourn? When

doth any man mourn for his fellow? Never! He rejoiceth—he maketh glad in his inmost heart—he cannot help it—it is nature. We all pray for—we all delight in each other's destruction. We were created to do so; or, why else should we feel so? I never wept for any man's death, but I have often laughed. No wedding—no christening, ever did me good; but a death hath always brought grist to the mill—it keeps my spade from rusting—ha, ha! Natural sympathy! out on the phrase. The distant heavens—the senseless trees—the impenetrable stones, shall regret you more than man—shall weep your loss with more sincerity—ay, 'tis well—rain on—splash, splash; it shall cool the hell-fever. Down, down—buckets and pails—ha, ha!"

Screaming which, rather than giving it natural utterance, Peter broke into one of his dreadful choking laughs, which, for some moments, paralyzed him, and made even the hardy Toft stand aghast.

There was a pause, during which the Sexton,

almost exhausted by the frenzy in which he had suffered himself to be involved, seemed insensible to all around him.

"I tell you what," said Burtenshaw to Plant, "I have always thought there was more in Peter Bradley nor appears on the outside: he is not what he seems to be, take my word on it. Lord bless you! do you think a man such as he could talk in that sort of way?—about nat'ral simpering—no such thing."

When Peter recovered, his merriment broke out afresh, having only acquired fury by the pause.

"Look out, look out," cried he; "hark to the thunder—list to the rain. Marked ye that flash—marked ye the clock-house—and the bird upon the roof? 'tis the Rook—the great bird of the house, that hath borne away the soul of the departed. There, there—can you not see it? It sits and croaks through storm and rain, and never heeds it all—and wherefore should it heed?

See it flaps its broad, black wings—it croaks—ha, ha! It comes—it comes."

And driven, we conclude, by the terror of the storm, from more secure quarters, the bird, at this instant, was dashed against the window, and fell to the ground. "That's a call," continued Peter; "it will be over soon, and we must set out. The dead will not need to tarry. Look at that trail of fire along the avenue; dost see yon line of sparkles, like a rocket's tail? That's the path the corpse will take—St. Hermes' flickering fire—Robin Goodfellow's dancing light, or the blue flame of the Corpse-candle, which I saw flitting to the church-yard last week, was not so pretty a sight—ha, ha!"

"Corpse-candle!" echoed Toft, who had, in a measure, regained his confidence, "thou'rt at thy old tricks, I see. Like the lying gipsy queans, thou'lt never be cured of fortune telling. Whose death dost think that candle did betoken?"

"Thy own," said Peter, sharply.

"Whose?"

"Thine."

"Mine—thou lying old cheat—mine—dost dare to say that to my face? Why, I'm as hale and hearty as ever a man in the house. Dost think there's no life and vigour in this arm, thou drivelling old dotard?"

Upon which, Toft seized Peter by the throat with an energy that, but for the timely intervention of the company, who rushed to his assistance, the prophet might himself have anticipated the doom he prognosticated for the other.

Released from the grasp of Toft, who was held back by the by-standers, Peter again broke forth into his eltrich laugh; and, staring right into the face of his adversary, with eyes glistening with fury, and with hands uplifted, as if in the act of calling down an imprecation on his head, he screamed, in a shrill and discordant voice, "So, you will not take my warning? you revile me—you flout me; 'tis well—your fate

shall prove a warning to all disbelievers—*they* shall remember this night, though *you* will not; —fool, fool—your doom has long been sealed; I saw your wraith choose out its last lodgment on Hallows e'en; I know the spot—your grave is dug already—ha, ha!" and, with renewed laughter, Peter rushed out of the room.

"Did I not caution thee not to provoke him, friend Toft?" said Plant; "it's ill playing with edged tools; but don't let him fly off in that tantrum—one of ye go after him."

"That will I," replied Burtenshaw, and he departed in search of the sexton.

"I'd advise thee to make it up with Peter so soon as thou can'st, neighbour," continued Plant; "he's a bad friend, but a worse enemy."

"Why, what harm can he do me?" returned Toft, who, however, was not without some misgivings. "If I must die, I can't help it—I shall go none the sooner for him, even if he speak the truth, which I don't think he do; and if I must, I sha'nt go unprepared—only I think as how, if

it pleased Providence, I could have wished to keep my old missis company some few years longer, and see those bits of lasses of mine grow up into women, and respectably provided for; but His will be done—I shan't leave 'em quite pennyless, and there's one eye, at least, that I'm sure won't be dry at my departure." Here the stout heart of Toft gave way, and he shed some few "natural tears;" which, however, he speedily brushed away. "I tell you what, neighbours," continued he, "I think we may all as well be thinking of going to our own homes, for, to my mind, we shall never reach the church-yard to-night."

"That *you* never will," exclaimed a voice behind him; and Toft, turning round, again met the glance of Peter.

"Come, come, Master Peter," cried the good-natured farmer, "this be ugly jesting—ax pardon for my share of it—sorry for what I did—so give us thy hand, man, and think no more about it."

Peter extended his claw, and the parties were, apparently, once more upon terms of friendship.

A supply of spirits was here introduced; lights were brought at the same time, and placed upon a long oak table. The party gathering round this, ill-humour was speedily dissipated, and even the storm disregarded, in the copious libations that ensued. At this juncture, a loiterer appeared in the hall. His movements were unnoticed by all excepting the Sexton, who watched his proceedings with some curiosity. The person walked to the window, appearing, so far as could be discovered, to eye the storm with great impatience. He then paced the hall rapidly backwards and forwards, and Peter fancied he could detect sounds of disappointment, in his muttered exclamations. Again he returned to the window, as if to ascertain the probable duration of the shower. It was a hopeless endeavour; all was pitch-dark without—the lightning was now only seen at long intervals,

but the rain still audibly descended in torrents. Apparently, seeing the impossibility of controuling the elements, the person approached the table. The merriment of the party waxed loud and boisterous. Under the influence of a stiff glass of brandy and water, Toft forgot his fears, and laughed in a manner so wild and frantic, that his friends began to entertain a new source of apprehension, as they whispered to each other, "that he was either fey, or his wits gone a wool-gathering."

"What think you of the night, Mr. Palmer?" asked the Sexton, of Jack, for he was the anxious investigator of the weather.

"Don't know—can't say—set in I think—damned unlucky—for the funeral I mean—we shall be drowned if we go."

"And drunk if we stay," rejoined the Sexton. "But never fear—it will hold up, depend upon it, long before we can start. Why they're not half ready yet; the coffin's only just soldered down, and there's I don't know what of

the ceremony to be gone through with. The grace-cup to be handed round, and the funeral oration to be delivered by Doctor Small."

"You don't say there's any of that infernal stuff to come," returned Jack, pettishly.

"Why not? It's no more to the Doctor's taste than to your own, but he can't help himself. He must go through with it: it has always been the custom here, and customs are sacred things with the Rookwoods. Ha, ha! Where have they put the prisoner?" asked Peter, with a sudden change of manner.

"I know the room, but can't describe it; it's two or three doors down the lower corridor of the eastern gallery."

"Good. And who are on guard?"

"Titus Tyrconnel, and that swivel-eyed quill-driver, Coates."

"Enough."

"Come, come, Master Peter," cried Toft, "let's have a stave—a chaunt—I know you can sing—I've heard you—give us one of your odd snatches."

"A good move," seconded Jack. "A song from you—capital."

"I've nothing I can bring to mind, but a ditty which I sung some years ago, at Sir Reginald's funeral. If such will serve you now, you shall have it, and welcome."

"By all means," returned Jack.

Preparing himself, like certain other accomplished vocalists, with a few preliminary hems and haws, the Sexton struck forth the following ballad, which we shall entitle

THE COFFIN.

In a church-yard upon the sward a coffin there was laid,
And leaning stood, beside the wood, a Sexton on his spade.
A coffin old and black it was, and fashioned curiously,
With quaint device of carved oak, in hideous fantasie.

For here was wrought the sculptured thought of a tormented face,
With serpents lithe that round it writhe, in folded strict embrace.
Grim visages of grinning fiends were at each corner set,
And emblematic scrolls, mort-heads, and bones, together met.

"Ah, well-a-day!" that Sexton gray unto himself did cry,
"Beneath that lid much lieth hid—much awful mysterie.

" It is an ancient coffin from the abbey that stood here;
" Perchance it holds an abbot's bones, perchance those of a freere.

" In digging deep, where monks do sleep, beneath yon cloister shrined,
" That coffin old, within the mould, it was my chance to find;
" The costly carvings of the lid I scraped full carefully,
" In hope to get at name or date, yet nothing could I see.

" With pick and spade I've plied my trade, for sixty years and more,
" Yet never found, beneath the ground, shell strange as that before;
" Full many coffins have I seen—have seen them deep or flat,
" Fantastical in fashion—none fantastical as that."

And saying so, with heavy blow the lid he shattered wide,
And pale with fright, a ghastly sight that Sexton gray espied,
A miserable sight it was, that loathsome corpse to see,
The last, last, dreary, darksome stage of fallen humanity.

Though all was gone save reeky bone, a green and grisly heap,
With scarce a trace of fleshly face, strange posture did it keep.
The hands were clench'd, the teeth were wrench'd, as if the wretch had risen,
E'en after death had ta'en his breath, to strive and burst his prison.

The neck was bent, the nails were rent, no limb or joint was straight;
Together glued, with blood imbued, black and coagulate.
And as the Sexton stooped him down, to lift the coffin plank,
His fingers were defiled all o'er with slimy substance dank.

"Ah, well-a-day!" that Sexton gray unto himself did cry,
"Full well I see how Fate's decree foredoomed this wretch to die;
"A living man, a breathing man, within the coffin thrust,
"Alack! alack! the agony ere he returned to dust."

A vision drear did then appear unto that Sexton's eyes;
Like that poor wight before him straight he in a coffin lies.
He lieth in a trance within that coffin close and fast;
Yet though he sleepeth now, he feels he shall awake at last.

The coffin then, by reverend men, is borne with footstep slow,
Where tapers shine before the shrine—where breathes the requiem low,
And for the dead the prayer is said, for the soul that is *not* flown,
Then all is drown'd in hollow sound, the earth is o'er him thrown.

He draweth breath—he wakes from death to life more horrible,
To agony! such agony! no living tongue may tell.
Die! die! he must, that wretched one! he struggles, strives in vain;
No more heaven's light, nor sunshine bright, shall he behold again.

"Gramercy, Lord!" the Sexton roar'd, awakening suddenly,
"If this be dream, yet doth it seem most dreadful so to die.
"Oh, cast my body in the sea! or hurl it on the shore!
"But nail me not in coffin fast—no grave will I dig more."

It was not difficult to discover the effect produced by this song, in the lengthened faces of

the greater part of the audience. Jack Palmer, however, laughed loud and long.

"Bravo, bravo!" cried he, "that suits my humour exactly; I can't abide the thoughts of being put under-ground—no coffin for me."

"A gibbet might, perhaps, serve your turn as well," thought the sexton; adding aloud, "I am now entitled to call upon you;—a song—a song."

"Ay, a song—a song," vociferated the hinds.

"Well, well," replied Jack, "I'll give you an old song, composed upon one Monsieur Du Val, a celebrated highwayman in his day. It's the best I have;" and he commenced in the true nasal whine, the following

LAMENT OF DU VAL.*

Ye bold, undaunted souls, attend
To me, who did the laws offend!
For now I come to let you know
What proved my fatal overthrow,
And brought my glory to decay;
It was my gang, for whom I hang.
Well-a-day! well-a-day!

* This is a song written about the time of the hero whom it celebrates. It has been extracted from an old black-letter placard, now in the library of the British Museum.

Unto a duke I was a page,
And nurtured in my tender age;
Until the devil did me entice,
To leave off virtue and follow vice;
No sooner was I led astray,
But wickedness did me possess.
Well-a-day! well-a-day!

If I to mind my crimes should call,
And lay them down before you all;
They would amount to such a sum
That there is none in Christendom
So many merry pranks did play;
But now, too late, I know my fate.
Well-a-day! well-a-day!

Upon the road I do declare,
I caused some lords and ladies fair
To quit their coach, and dance with us;
This being done, the case was thus,
They for their music needs must pay;
But now, at last, those jokes are past.
Well-a-day! well-a-day!

When I was mounted on my steed,
I thought myself a man indeed;
With pistol cock'd, and glittering sword,
"Stand and deliver," was the word;
Which makes me now lament and say,
Pity the fall of Claude Du Val!
Well-a-day! well-a-day!

I did belong unto a crew
Of swaggering blades as ever drew;
Stout Witherington, and Douglas both*,
We were all three engaged by oath,
Upon the road to take our way;
But now Du Val must pay for all.
Well-a-day! well-a-day!

Because I was a Frenchman born,
Some persons treated me with scorn;
But being of a daring soul,
Although my deeds were something foul;
My gaudy plumes I did display;
But now my pride is laid aside.
Well-a-day! well-a-day!

I reign'd with an undaunted mind
Seven years, but now at last I find
The pitcher that so often goes
Unto the well, as proverb shows,
Comes broken home at last we say,
For now I see my destiny.
Well-a-day! well-a-day!

Then being brought to Justice Hall,
Tried, and condemned before them all;
Where many noble lords did come,
And ladies for to hear my doom;
Then sentence past, without delay,
The halter first, and Tyburn last,
In one day, in one day.

* John Witherington, and Sawney Douglas, two notorious highwaymen of the day.

Uproarious applause followed Jack's song, when the joviality of the mourners was interrupted by a summons to attend in the state room. Silence was at once completely restored; and, in the best order they could assume, they followed their leader, Peter Bradley. Jack Palmer was amongst the last to enter, and looked a not incurious spectator of a by no means common scene.

Preparations had been made to give due solemnity to the ceremonial. The leaden coffin was fastened down, and enclosed in an outer case of oak, upon the lid of which stood a richly-chased, massive silver flaggon, filled with burnt claret, called the grace-cup. All the lights were removed, save two lofty wax flambeaux, which were placed to the back, and threw a lurid glare upon the group immediately about the body; this group consisted of Ranulph Rookwood, and some other friends of the deceased. Doctor Small stood in front of the bier; and, under the directions of Peter Bradley, the tenantry and household were formed into a wide half-moon across the chamber. There was a hush of

expectation, as Doctor Small looked gravely around; and even Jack Palmer, who was as little likely as any man to yield to an impression of the kind, felt himself moved by the scene.

The very orthodox Small, as is well known to our readers, held every thing savouring of the superstitions of the Scarlet Woman in supreme abomination; and, entertaining such opinions, it can scarcely be supposed that a funeral oration would find much favour in his eyes, accompanied, as it was, with the accessories of censer—of candle—of cup—all evidently derived from that period when, under the three-crowned Pontiff's sway, the shaven priest pronounced his benediction o'er the dead, and released the penitent's soul from purgatorial flames, while he heavily mulcted the price of his redemption from the possessions of his successor. Small resented the idea of treading in such steps, as an insult to himself and to his cloth. Was he, the intolerant of papistry, to tolerate this? Was he, who could not endure the odour of Catholicism, to have his nostrils thus polluted—his garments thus defiled

—by actual contact with it? It was not to be thought of: and he had formally signified his declination to Mr. Coates, when a little conversation with that gentleman, and certain weighty considerations therein held forth (the advowson of the church of Rookwood residing with the family), and represented by him, as well as the placing in juxta-position of penalties to be incurred by refusal, that the scruples of Small gave way; and, with the best grace he could muster, very reluctantly promised compliance.

With these feelings, it will be readily conceived that the Doctor was not in the best possible frame of mind for the delivery of his exhortation. His temper had been ruffled by a variety of petty annoyances, amongst the greatest of which was the condition whereunto the good cheer had reduced his clerk, Zachariah Trundletext, whose reeling eye, pendulous position, and open mouth, proclaimed him absolutely incapable of office. Zachariah was, in consequence, dismissed, and Small commenced his discourse unsupported.

But as our recording it would not probably contribute to the amusement of our readers, whatever it might to their edification, we shall pass it over with very brief mention. Suffice it to say, that the oration was so thickly interstrewn with lengthy quotations from the Fathers—Chrysostomus, Hieronimus, Ambrosius, Basilius, Bernardus, and the rest, with whose recondite latinity, notwithstanding the clashing of their opinions with his own, the Doctor was intimately acquainted, and which he moreover delighted to quote, that his auditors were absolutely mystified and perplexed, and probably not without design. Countenances of such amazement were turned towards him, that Small, who had a keen sense of the ludicrous, could scarce forbear smiling, as he proceeded; and if we could suspect so grave a personage of waggery, we should almost think that, by way of retaliation, he had palmed some abstruse monkish funeral discourse upon his astounded auditors. A strong impression was, however, produced upon his hearers, more by

his manner than by the incomprehensible language in which his admonitions were conveyed.

After an eloquent and intelligible eulogium upon his deceased friend, which excited much sympathy in the circle, he thus concluded his address, turning towards the bier: — "Yet, wherefore should we lament him? Why should our tears continue to flow? '*Foras tibicines et turbo tumultuans lessum illi canens.*' He is not dead, but sleepeth. He hath seen out his day —night hath set in, and he is at rest. Let us reflect, that it is appointed unto all men once to die—let us reflect from how many miseries the stroke of death freeth us—let us reflect also, before we regret the departed, that he hath exchanged this brief life for eternity—let us reflect, also, that but the worser part is dead; that the soul surviveth the body; and finally, that whither he is gone, we soon shall follow. Whoso knoweth not, whatsoever be his station, with how many calamities life is beset? We sojourn amidst a Vale of Tears. Whence St. Jerome in

his Epistle to Tyrasius, maintaineth that Jesus wept not for Lazarus dead, but for Lazarus that should be raised from the dead. '*Plane inquit Lazarum mortuum Dominus flevit, sed non tuas lacrymas fudit. Doluit Lazarum non dormientem, sed potius resurgentem, et flebat, quem cogebatur propter salvandos alios ad vitam revocare. Hanc vitam dans Dominus ingemiscebat, quam tu doles esse sublatam.*' With St. Jerome agreeth St. Ambrose, who, in his Oration on the Resurrection in Faith, thus writeth:—'*Quas non procellas tempestatesque patimur in hac vitâ? Cujus parcetur meritis?*' And, lastly, St. Chrysostom, in his sixty-ninth homily, thus sayeth:—'*Si defunctum diligeres gaudere oporteret atque lætari, quod ex presentibus esset absolutus. Quid enim amplius est quæso? quid verò peregrinum et novum? Nonne per singulos dies eadem, cernimus retorqueri? Dies et nox, nox et dies; hyems et æstas, æstas et hyems, et amplius nihil: et hæc quidem semper eadem, mala verò peregrina*

et recentiora. Hæc igitur ipsum sustinere per singulos dies, et hic manere volebas et ægrotare, flere, formidare, et contrimiscere, et has quidem pati molestias, has verò ne patiatur timere.' What remaineth for us, is to offer one common prayer for his repose, and from the bottom of our hearts, as a last farewell, to exclaim—*Requiescat in pace.*"

"Amen!" cried the Sexton.

The oration being concluded, biscuits and confectionery were, according to old observance, handed to such of the tenantry as chose to partake of them. The serving of the grace-cup, which ought to have formed part of the duties of Zachariah, had he been capable of office, fell to the share of the Sexton. The bowl was kissed, first by Ranulph, with lips that trembled with emotion, and afterwards by his surrounding friends; but no drop was tasted, a circumstance which did not escape Peter's observation. Proceeding to the tenantry, the first in order happened to be farmer Toft. Peter presented the cup,

and as Toft was about to draw a deep draught of the wine, Peter whispered in his ear, "Take my advice, for once, friend Toft, and don't let a bubble of the liquid pass your lips. For every drop of the wine you swallow, Sir Piers will have one sin the less, and you a load the greater on your conscience. Would you pawn your soul for a mouthful of sweet drink, which shall be pleasant in the mouth, but bitter in the belly? The grapes from which that wine was pressed, were grapes of gall. Did'st never hear of Sin-swallowing? For what else was this custom adopted? See'st thou not the cup's brim hath not yet been moistened? Well, as you will—ha, ha!" and the Sexton passed onwards.

His work being nearly completed, he looked around for Jack Palmer, whom he had remarked during the discourse, but could no where discover him. Peter was about to place the flaggon, now almost drained of its contents, upon its former resting place, when Small took it from his hands.

"*In poculi fundo residuum non relinque*, admonisheth Pythagoras," said he. "Let there be no dreg left in the cup—thy task is complete." Saying which, he returned it to the Sexton.

"My task here is ended," muttered the Sexton, "but not elsewhere. Foul weather or fine—thunder or calm, I must to the church." Bequeathing his final instructions to certain of the household, who were to form part of the procession, in case the procession set out, he opened the hall door, and, the pelting shower dashing heavily in his face, took his way up the avenue. "Now this is what I like," thought he, "when my skin is heated with drink, to be soaked through and through—to hear the heavy rain, pattering amongst the leaves of the trees. It will soon be over," added he, holding out his hand; "thus is it ever—your storm—your deluging shower, pours down, and is done; but your mizzling, muddling mist drags out the day. Give *me* the storm—ha, ha!"

CHAPTER II.

Com. This road is but uneven. How is this?—
Guide. This is the burial-ground, my Lord.—These hills are graves.
Com. Then do we trespass, but the dead ne'er heed us.
Guide. Our feet
They heed not, and they hear not; but some tell
How a light word's recorded, till the day
When they shall burst their graves.
Com. Pray God, it mend the road!

ISAAC COMNENES.

LIGHTS streamed through the chancel window as the Sexton entered the church-yard, darkly defining all the ramified tracery of the noble Gothic arch, and illumining the gorgeous dyes of its richly-stained glass, profusely decorated with the armorial bearings of the founder of the fane, and the many alliances of his descendants. The sheen of their blazonry gleamed bright in

the darkness, as if to herald to his last home another of the line whose achievements it displayed. Glowing colourings, chequered like rainbow tints, were shed upon the broken leaves of the adjoining yew-trees, and upon the rounded grassy tombs.

Opening the gate, as he looked in that direction, Peter became aware of a dark figure, enveloped in a large black cloak, and, what appeared to be a plumed hat, standing at some distance, between the window and the tree, and so intervening as to receive the full influence of the stream of radiance, which served to dilate its already almost superhuman stature. The Sexton stopped. The figure remained stationary. There was something singular, both in the costume and situation of the person. Peter, being naturally of an inquisitive turn, his curiosity was speedily aroused, and, familiar with every inch of the churchyard, he determined to take the nearest cut, and to ascertain to whom the mysterious cloak and hat belonged. Making his way over

the undulating graves, and instinctively rounding the headstones that intercepted his path, he speedily drew near the object of his inquiry. From the moveless posture which it maintained, the figure appeared to be unconscious of Peter's approach. To his eyes, it seemed to expand as he advanced. He was now almost close upon it, when missing his footing, owing to the uncertain state of the ground, rendered slippery by the rain, he stumbled forwards; and although he arose upon the instant, the figure had vanished.

Peter stared in amazement.

"What can this mean?" exclaimed he. "Who, or what have I beheld?—this was the exact spot upon which it stood—this flag—Randolph Crewe's grave. The stone clanks firmly beneath my feet. It could never be poor Randolph's ghost. He could scarce afford a coat to cover his back during his lifetime, much less a cloak and cap that might become a baron. And the devil is too wise to trust him. What if it be old Sir Ranulph, that I have seen?

that feather looked like the sculptured plume upon his marble helm. I have heard he walks on nights like these. And then the voice I heard last night. Tut, it cannot be. Had I not slipped over yon unlucky hillock, it would not have escaped me, had it been human. But I must not tarry here, for ghost or goblin—the funeral train will tread upon my kibes else."

Peter hastened to the church porch, and after shaking the wet from off his clothes, as a water-dog might shake the moisture from his curly hide, and wringing his broad felt hat, he entered the holy edifice. The interior seemed one blaze of light to the Sexton, in his sudden transition from outer darkness. Some few persons were assembled, probably such as were engaged in the preparations, but there was one small group which immediately attracted his attention.

Near the communion-table were three persons, habited in deep mourning, apparently occupied in examining the various monumental sculpture that enriched the walls. Peter's office led him

to that part of the church. About to descend into the vaults, to make the last preparations for the reception of the dead, with lantern in hand, keys, and a crowbar, he approached the party. Little attention was paid to the Sexton's proceedings, till the harsh grating of the lock attracted their notice.

Peter started, as he beheld the face of one of the three, and relaxing his hold upon the key, the strong bolt shot back in the lock. There was a whisper amongst the party. A light step was heard advancing towards him, and ere the Sexton could sufficiently recover his surprise, to force open the door, a female figure stood by his side.

The keen, inquiring stare which Peter bestowed upon the countenance of the young lady, so abashed her, that she hesitated in her purpose of addressing him, and hastily retired. It was not admiration of the exquisite grace and beauty of the person who had approached him, that attracted the Sexton's regard, for Peter was no

idolater of feminine loveliness—it was not the witchery of the dark blue eyes, into whose depths he gazed, that drew enraptured worship from his steely soul—it was not to peruse the enchanting outline of that face, or to mark her free and fawn-like step—it was with nothing of pleasurable emotion, but with a mixed feeling of wonder and curiosity, that he gazed upon her.

Reinforced by her companions, an elderly lady and a tall handsome man, whose bearing and deportment bespoke him to be a soldier, the fair stranger again ventured towards Peter.

"You are the Sexton," said she, addressing him in a voice sweet and musical.

"I am;" returned Peter—it was harmony, succeeded by dissonance.

"You perhaps can tell us then," said the elderly lady, "whether the funeral is likely to take place to-night? we thought it possible that the storm might altogether prevent it."

"The storm is over, as nearly as may be,"

replied Peter. "The body will soon be on its way; I am but now arrived from the Hall."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the lady. "None of the family will be present, I suppose; who is the chief mourner?"

"Who but young Ranulph?" answered the Sexton. "There may be more of the family than were expected."

"Is he returned?" asked the young lady, with great agitation of manner. "I thought he was abroad—that he was not expected; are you sure you are rightly informed?"

"Rightly informed!" echoed Peter; "I parted with him at the Hall not ten minutes since. He returned to-night, most unexpectedly."

"Oh, mother!" exclaimed the younger Lady, "that this should be—that I should meet him here. Why did we come?—let us depart."

"It is impossible," replied her mother; "the storm forbids it. It is so strange, I scarce can credit it. Are you sure of this?" addressing Peter.

"I have told you so. Other things, as strange, have happened at the Hall," muttered he.

"What mean you?" asked the gentleman, noticing this remark.

"You had not needed to ask the question of me, had you been there, amongst the other guests," retorted Peter. "Odd things have been done there this night, and strange things may occur before the morning."

"You are insolent, sirrah; I comprehend you not."

"Enough! I can comprehend *you*," replied Peter, doggedly; "I know the count of the mourners invited to the ceremonial. Methinks there are three too many."

"Know you this saucy knave, mother?"

"I cannot call him to mind, though I fancy I have seen him before."

"My recollection serves me better, lady," interposed Peter. "I remember one, who was once the proud heiress of Rookwood—ay, proud

and beautiful—then the house was filled with her gallant suitors. Swords were crossed for her. Hearts bled for her. Yet she favoured none, until one hapless hour. Sir Reginald Rookwood *had* a daughter; Sir Reginald *lost* a daughter. Ha—I see I am right. Well, he is dead and buried; and Reginald, his son, is dead likewise; and Sir Piers is on his road hither; and you are the last, as in the course of Nature, you might have been the first. And, now that they are all gone, you do rightly to bury your grievances with them. All that perplexes me, is to see you *here;* and yet not altogether that, for young Ranulph Rookwood is now lord of the ascendant, and may-hap—ha, I see—

'But of right, and of rule, to the ancient nest,
The rook that with rook mates, shall hold him possest.'

Are you familiar with that old saying, of your house?"

"Silence, sirrah," exclaimed the gentleman, "or I will beat your brains out with your own spade."

"No; let him speak—he has awakened thoughts of other days," said the lady, with an expression of anguish.

"I have done," said Peter, "and must to work; will you descend with me, Madam, into the sepulchre of your ancestry? All your family lie within—ay, and the Lady Eleanor amongst the number."

"Not for worlds," replied Mrs. Mowbray, for it was she who spoke.

"If my brother would bear me company, I would almost venture to enter the vault," said the younger lady.

"Eleanor, it is a wild wish!"

"And perhaps a wrong one," returned she; "but I know not how it is, an impulse, which I can scarce define, prompts me to visit that tomb. Will you go with me, mother?"

"It is a dismal place; but if you wish to go, I will not oppose your inclination—my son will attend us." And they approached the door.

The sexton held the lantern, so as to throw its light upon the steps as they descended towards the gloomy receptacle of the departed. Our readers are already acquainted with its appearance. Eleanor half repented having ventured within its dreary limits; so much did the appearance of the yawning cells, surcharged with mortality, and, above all, the ghostly figure of the grim knight, affect her with dread, as she looked wistfully around. She required all the support her brother's arm could afford her; nor was Mrs. Mowbray altogether unmoved.

"Whom does that marble effigy represent?" asked Eleanor.

"The first Sir Ranulph," returned the Sexton, with a grin.

Peter walked slowly on, holding the light to the mouth of each recess, as he passed. Coffin upon coffin was discovered. He paused. "There lies Sir Reginald," quoth he—"and *there*, crushed in her coffin, even as she was crushed in her brief existence, the Lady Elea-

nor. Ay! look upon it—there lies your mother," addressing Mrs. Mowbray; "*your* ancestress, young lady," turning to Eleanor. "Beauty, after all, is but a frail flower. It soon withers. She was once as beautiful as you are, and scarce had numbered more years to her life, when she was brought hither. Alas! that I should have to tell it. You, who have so much loveliness, would do well sometimes to think of this, when your heart beats high with conquest; for the moth's thousand glorious dyes are not more easily effaced, than beauty's flaunting attractions. Your comeliness is not more surely dust, than that gaudy insect's winged splendour, which the slightest touch will efface."

"This place is not more frightful than that man," whispered Eleanor to her brother.

"And all the family are here interred, you say?" inquired Mrs. Mowbray.

"All," replied the Sexton.

"Where, then, lies Sir Reginald's younger brother?"

"Who?" exclaimed Peter, starting.

"Alan Rookwood."

"What of him?"

"Nothing of moment; but I thought you could perhaps inform me. He died young."

"He did," replied Peter, in an altered tone, "very young; but not before he had lived to an old age of wretchedness. Do you know his story, Madam?"

"I have heard it."

"From your father's lips?"

"From Sir Reginald Rookwood's—never. Call him not my father, sirrah; even *here* I will not have him named so to me."

"Your pardon, Madam," returned the Sexton. "Great cruelty was shown to the Lady Eleanor, and may well call forth implacable resentment in her child; yet methinks the wrong he did his brother Alan, was the foulest stain with which Sir Reginald's black soul was dyed."

"The wrong he did my mother was the fouler," said Mrs. Mowbray, furiously. "How can a

churl like thou judge in such cases, or institute any parallel between them?"

"True—true—how can I judge?" rejoined the Sexton. "I have no feeling left for aught; and if I had, I am a base-born churl, and ought not to indulge it. But methinks, he who wrongeth his brother, in the nicest point in which man can be wronged—who robbeth him of one rich gem, entrusted to a brother's keeping—who stabbeth him where he is most defenceless—most exposed, yet where he should be arrow-proof—who druggeth, with subtlest poison, the sacred cup of fraternal love, cannot well sin more deep and damnably."

"And did Sir Reginald do this?" demanded Major Mowbray.

"He wronged his brother's honour," replied the Sexton; "he robbed him of his wife—poisoned his existence, and hurried him to an early grave."

Eleanor shudderingly held back during this

horrible narration, the hearing of which she would willingly have shunned, had it been possible.

"Can this be true?" asked the Major.

"Too true, my son," replied Mrs. Mowbray, sorrowfully.

"Gracious God! and he could live to a good old age, with such a crime upon his conscience."

"His conscience—ha, ha," echoed the Sexton. "He was not troubled with the burthen."

"And where lies the unfortunate brother?" asked Major Mowbray.

"'Twixt two cross roads. Where else should the suicide lie?"

"Suicide!" echoed Mrs. Mowbray; "and what became of her—the wretched, guilty—doubly guilty one?"

"She died, despairing," replied the Sexton, in a hollow voice.

"They had a daughter—what of her?" asked Mrs. Mowbray.

"A daughter! God in heaven!" exclaimed Major Mowbray.

"Ay—a daughter!" returned the Sexton. "Start not, Sir; she was born before Sir Reginald broke his faith with God and man. *They* were spared that guilt."

"Thank heaven," exclaimed the Major. "what became of her?"

"She is dead, likewise, I have heard," returned Peter. "The injured and the injurer are gone—the destroyer and his victims."

Awaiting no reply, Peter further traversed the vault, elevating the light, so as to reveal the contents of each cell. One circumstance filled him with surprise and dismay—he could nowhere perceive the coffin of his daughter. Convinced that he himself had placed it upon the pile before him—no one, of whom he was aware, could have entered the vault, subsequently to his visit; yet, although the keys had never quitted his possession, it would appear that the coffin had been removed. In vain he peered into

each recess—they were full—they were undisturbed; and, with much internal marveling and misgiving, Peter gave up the search. "Some one must have a key of the place, that I wot not of," murmured he to himself; "yet that is scarce likely; and then the unaccountable intrusion which I experienced last night in my conference with Luke, would seem as if—what, the dead meddle with the dead—impossible! but this must be looked to. Now I bethink me, Luke stayed for some space within the vault; what if he found some means to hide it? it is more than probable." As he moved his footsteps, his companions silently followed. He stopped, and, signifying that all was finished, they not unwillingly quitted this chamber of death, leaving him behind them.

"It is a dreadful place," whispered Eleanor to her mother; "nor would I have visited it, had I conceived any thing of its horrors. And that strange man! who or what is he, that he talks in a strain so forbidding?"

"Ay, who is he?" asked Major Mowbray.

"I recollect him now," replied Mrs. Mowbray; "he is one who hath ever been connected with the family. He had a daughter, whose beauty was her ruin: it is a sad tale; I cannot tell it now: you have heard enough of misery and guilt; but that may account for his bitterness of speech. He was a dependant upon my poor brother."

"Poor man!" replied Eleanor; "if he has been unfortunate, I pity him. I am sorry we have been into that dreadful place. I am very faint; and I tremble more than ever, at the thought of meeting Ranulph Rookwood again. I can scarce support myself—I am sure I shall not venture to look upon him."

"Had I dreamed of the likelihood of his attending the ceremony, rest assured, dear Eleanor, we should not have been here: but I was informed there was no possibility of his return; and upon that understanding alone it was, I came; but being here, I will not withdraw.

Compose yourself, my child. It will be a trying time to both of us; but it is now inevitable."

At this moment the bell began to toll. "The procession has started," said Peter, as he passed the Mowbrays. "That bell announces the setting out."

"See yonder persons hurrying to the door," exclaimed Eleanor, with eagerness, and trembling violently. "They are coming. Oh! I shall never be able to go through with it, dear mother!"

Peter hastened to the church door, where he stationed himself, in company with a host of others equally curious. Flickering lights in the distance, shining like stars through the trees, showed them that the procession was collecting in front of the Hall. The rain had now entirely ceased; the thunder only muttered from afar, and the lambent lightning seemed only to lick the moisture from the trees. The bell continued to toll, and its loud booming awoke the drowsy echoes of the valley. On the sudden, a

solitary, startling concussion of thunder was heard; and presently a man rushed down from the belfry, with the tidings that he had seen a ball of fire fall from a cloud right over the Hall. Every ear was on the alert for the next sound: none was heard. It was the crisis of the storm. Still the funeral procession advanced not. The strong sheen of the torchlight was still visible from the bottom of the avenue, now disappearing, now brightly glimmering, as if the bearers were hurrying to and fro amongst the trees. It was evident that much confusion prevailed, and that some misadventure had occurred. Each man muttered to his neighbour, and few were there who had not in a measure surmised the cause of the delay. At this juncture, a person without his hat, breathless with haste, and almost palsied with affright, rushed through the midst of them, and, stumbling over the threshhold, fell headlong into the church.

"What's the matter, Master Plant? What has happened? Tell us! Tell us!" exclaimed several voices, simultaneously.

"The matter!" cried Plant, gasping for utterance, and not attempting to raise himself, "It's horrible—dreadful."

"Horrible! What is it?" inquired Peter, approaching the fallen man.

"*He* said it would be so—*he* said it—take him away, neighbours—his eyes do scorch like living coals!" cried Plant, hiding his face.

"The man's drunk," said Peter; "yet something must have happened."

"Ay, indeed," repeated Plant, raising himself from the ground, "summat *has* happened, belike—my skin's all turned to goose-flesh, and the marrow frozen cold in my bones but to think on it. Drunk! Lord save us all! I wish I were. What I've seen would sober any man, if he'd swallowed a hogshead."

"Tell us, then, what thou hast seen?" said Peter.

"And dost *thou* need to ask, Peter Bradley? thou, who foretold it all? but I will not say what I think, though my tongue itches to tell thee the truth. Be satisfied—thy warlock's art is right—he is dead."

"Who? Ranulph Rookwood? Has any thing befallen him, or the prisoner, Luke Bradley?" asked the Sexton, with eagerness.

A scream here burst forth from one who was standing behind the group; and, in spite of the efforts of her mother to withhold her, Eleanor Mowbray rushed forward.

"What hath happened to him?" she cried.

"Noa—noa—not to Sir Ranulph—he be with the body."

"Heaven be thanked for that!" exclaimed Eleanor. And then, as ashamed of her own vehemence, and, it might be, of her apparent indifference to another's fate, she inquired who was hurt?

"It be poor neighbour Toft, that be kill'd, Madam."

"Kill'd!"

"Ay, kill'd!" reiterated Plant; "burnt to a cinder—blackened—baked, by the thunnerbowt."

Exclamations of horror burst from all around.

No one was more surprised at this intelligence

than the Sexton. Like many other seers, he had not, in all probability, calculated upon the fulfilment of his predictions, and he now stared aghast, at the extent of his own fore-knowledge.

"Struck by a thunderbolt! dead! who would have thought it?" mused he. "Why, it is not half an hour since I saw him with the grace-cup in his hand—and he is stricken—ay—ay. I'm never mistaken, not I. I saw it in his look—*that* never deceives me. I can see it as your butcher can detect the fly-blow in his meat. If a man's pre-doomed, it is not for me to avert or to accelerate his fate. I am but like the senseless bit of iron on the dial, to indicate the time; the power that casts that shadow comes from above. A little houseleek*, or a sprig of laurel, might have held him scatheless. But come, Master Plant, pluck up thy heart, and tell us how it happened."

"I tell'ee what, Master Peter," said Plant,

* Alluding to the popular superstition, that these plants possess a charm against thunder.

shaking his bullet-head, "it be well for thee thou did'nt live in my grand-father's time, or thou'dst ha' been duck'd in a blanket, or may be burnt at the stake, like Ridley and Latimer, as we read on—but howsomedever that might be, ye shall hear how this did happen, and nobody can tell'ee better nor I, seeing I were near to him, poor fellow, at the time. Well, we thought as how the storm were all over—and had all got into order of march, and were just beginning to step up the avenue, the coffin bearers pushing lustily along, and the torches shining grandly, when poor Simon Toft, who could never travel well in liquor in his life, reel'd to one side, and staggering against the first huge lime-tree, sat himself down beneath it—thou knowest the tree I mean."

"The tree of fate," returned Peter. "I ought, methinks, to know it."

"Well, I were just stepping aside, to pick him up, when all at once there comes such a crack of thunder, and, whizzing through the

trees, flashed a great globe of red fire, so bright and dazzlin', it nearly blinded me; and when I opened my eyes, winkin' and waterin', I seed that which blinded me more even than the flash—that which had just afore been poor Simon, but which was now a mass o' black smouldering ashes, clean consumed and destroyed—his clothes rent to a thousand tatters—the earth and stones tossed up, and scattered all about, and a great splinter of the tree lying beside him."

"God's will be done," said the Sexton; "this is an awful judgment."

"And Sathan cast down; for this is a spice o' his handiwork," muttered Plant; adding, as he slunk away, "if ever he do come to the blanket, dang me if I don't lend a helpin hand."

CHAPTER III.

> How like a silent stream, shaded by night,
> And gliding softly with our windy sighs,
> Moves the whole frame of this solemnity!
> Tears, sighs, and blacks, filling the simile!
> Whilst I, the only murmur in this grove
> Of death, thus hollowly break forth!
>
> THE FATAL DOWRY.

WORD being given that the funeral train was fast approaching, the church door was thrown open, and the assemblage divided in two lines, to allow it admission.

Meanwhile, a striking change had taken place, even in this brief period, in the appearance of the night. The sky, heretofore curtained with darkness, was now illumined by a serene, soft moon, which, floating in a watery halo, tinged with radiance the edges of

a few ghostly clouds, that hurried along the deep and starlight skies. The suddenness of the change could not fail to excite surprise and admiration, mingled with regret, that the procession had not been delayed until the present time.

Slowly and mournfully the train was seen to approach the churchyard, winding, two by two, with melancholy step, around the corner of the road. First came Doctor Small; then the mutes, with their sable panoply—next, the torch-bearers —next, those who sustained the coffin, bending beneath their ponderous burthen, followed by Sir Ranulph, and a long line of attendants, all plainly to be distinguished by the flashing torch-light. There was a slight halt at the gate, and the coffin changed supporters.

"Ill luck betide them!" ejaculated Peter; "could they find no other place than that to halt at? must Sir Piers be gate-keeper till next Yule? No," added he, seeing what followed; "it will be poor Toft, after all."

Following close upon the coffin, came a rude shell, containing, as Peter rightly conjectured, the miserable remains of Simon Toft, who had met his fate in the manner described by Master Plant. The bolt of death had glanced from the tree which it had first struck, and reduced the unfortunate farmer to a heap of dust. Universal consternation prevailed, and doubts were entertained as to what course should be pursued. It was judged best by Doctor Small, to remove the remains at once to the charnel house. Thus, "unanointed, unanealed, with all his imperfections on his head," was poor Simon Toft, in one brief second—in the twinkling of an eye, plunged from the height of festivity, to the darkness of the grave, and so horribly disfigured, that scarce a vestige of humanity was discernible in the mutilated mass that remained of him. Truly may we be said to walk in blindness, and amidst deep pitfalls!

The churchyard was thronged by the mournful train. The long array of dusky figures—

the waving torch-light, gleaming ruddily in the white moonshine—now glistening upon the sombre habiliments of the bearers, and on their shrouded load—now reflected upon the spectral branches of the yew trees, or falling upon the ivied buttresses of the ancient church, constituted no unimpressive picture. Over all, like a silver lamp, hung in the still sky, shone the moon, shedding a soothing, spiritual lustre over the scene.

The pealing organ broke into a solemn strain, as the coffin was borne along the mid aisle—the mourners following, with reverend step, and slow. It was deposited near the mouth of the vault, the whole assemblage circling around it. Doctor Small proceeded with the performance of that magnificent service appointed for the burial of the dead, in a tone as remarkable for its sadness, as for its force and fervour. There was a tear in every eye—a cloud on every brow.

Brightly illumined as was the whole building, there were still some recesses which, owing to

the intervention of heavy pillars, were thrown somewhat into shade; and in one of these, supported by her mother and brother, stood Eleanor, a weeping witness of the scene. She beheld the palled coffin silently borne along—she saw one dark figure slowly following—she knew those pale features—oh, how pale they were! A year had wrought a fearful alteration; she could scarce credit what she beheld. He must, indeed, have suffered—deeply suffered; and her heart told her that his sorrows had been for her. He paused—he raised his melancholy eyes, and, for an instant, looked around; they wandered on empty space—yet those dark orbs seemed to settle upon her—interpenetrating her soul. She trembled with emotion—her blood mounted to her cheeks—her heart fluttered like the dove's; he saw her not. The agony—the ecstacy is past. The service proceeds, and she fain would listen; the sounds reach her ears, but not their import—one thought alone absorbs her.

Many a woeful look, besides, was directed to

the principal figure in this ceremonial—to Ranulph Rookwood. He was a prey to unutterable anguish of soul; his heart bled inwardly, for the father he had lost. Mechanically following the body down the aisle—he had taken his station near it, gazing with confused vision, upon the by-standers—had listened, with a sad composure to the expressive delivery of Small, until he read—"*For man walketh in a vain shadow, and disquieteth himself in vain; he heapeth up riches, and cannot tell who shall gather them.*"

"Verily!" exclaimed a deep voice; and Ranulph looking round, met the eyes of Peter Bradley fixed full upon him; but it was evidently not the Sexton who had spoken.

Ranulph withdrew his glance; but, in spite of his anxiety to forget it, that look haunted him. Small continued the service. He arrived at this verse:—"*Thou hast set our misdeeds before thee; and our secret sins in the light of thy countenance.*"

"Even so!" exclaimed the voice; but Ranulph looked not again. His heart melted within him; and leaning his face upon his hand, he wept aloud. In the fulness of his grief, he took little note of passing things: he was absorbed in affliction. Scheme and speculation, for future conduct, were all swept away, by the strong tide of woe—were all banished, by the reflections of the emptiness and unsubstantiality of human existence. Death swallowed all. Ranulph became, as it were, entranced. A hand was laid upon his shoulder—it was that of Doctor Small.

"Command yourself, I entreat of you, my dear Sir Ranulph," said the Doctor, "and suffer this melancholy ceremonial to be completed." Saying which, he gently withdrew Ranulph from his support, and the coffin was lowered into the vault.

Ranulph remained for some time in the extremity of sorrow. When he in part recovered, the crowd had dispersed, and few persons were remaining within the church; yet near him stood

three apparent loiterers. They advanced towards him. An exclamation of surprise and joy burst from his lips.

"Eleanor!"

"Ranulph!"

"Is it possible? Do I indeed behold you, Eleanor?"

No other word was spoken. They rushed into each other's arms. Oh! sad—sad is the lover's parting—no pang so keen; but if life hath a joy more exquisite than others—if felicity hath one drop more racy than the rest in her honied cup, it is the gust of happiness which the lover enjoys in such a union as the present. To say that he was as one raised from the depths of misery, by some angel comforter, were a feeble comparison of the transport of Ranulph. To paint the thrilling delight of Eleanor—the trembling tenderness—the fond abandonment, which vanquished all her maiden scruples, would be impossible. Reluctantly yielding—fearing, yet complying, her lips were sealed in

one long, loving, holy kiss, the sanctifying pledge of their tried affection.

"Eleanor—dear Eleanor," exclaimed Ranulph —"though I hold you within my arms—though each nerve within my frame, assures me of your presence—though I look into those eyes, which seem fraught with greater endearment than ever I have known them wear—yet, though I see and feel, and know all this, so sudden, so unlooked for is the happiness, that I could almost doubt its reality. Why—why am I so blest? Forgive me, Eleanor, if so many dark oppressions weigh upon my brain, that what I fain would wish the most, I most discredit; and though I hold thee to my bosom, and feel to my heart's inmost core that thou art nigh me, yet do I fear that the fate which hath brought thee hither, may tear thee from me. Speak—speak, dear Eleanor, and say to what blessed circumstance I am indebted for this unlooked-for happiness."

"I am here—*we* are here, dear Ranulph; but

the melancholy occasion of our meeting is one which represses even my joy at seeing you. We are staying not far hence, with friends; and my mother, hearing of her brother's death, and wishing to bury all animosity with him, resolved to be present at the sad ceremony. We were told you could not be here."

"And would my presence have prevented your attendance, Eleanor?"

"Not that, dear Ranulph; but——"

"But what?"

"I feared to meet you."

"Why fear, dear Eleanor?"

She turned aside without answering.

At that moment, a recollection of his mother's warning words, and of the change that might take place in his fortunes, crossed Ranulph's mind as the baleful shadow of a fiend flitting over a Paradise; and he shuddered.

"We are but secondary in your regards, Sir Ranulph," said Mrs. Mowbray, advancing.

"*Sir* Ranulph!" mentally echoed the young

man—"What will *she* think, when she knows that that title is not mine?—I dread to tell her." He then added aloud, with a melancholy smile—"I crave your pardon, Madam, but the delight of a meeting so unexpected with your daughter must plead my apology."

"None is wanting, Sir Ranulph," said Major Mowbray. "I, who have known what separation from my sister is, can readily excuse your feelings. But you look ill."

"I have, indeed, experienced much mental anxiety," said Ranulph, looking at Eleanor; "but that is now past, and I would fain hope that a brighter day is dawning." His heart answered, 'twas but a hope.

"You were unlooked for here to-night, Ranulph," said Mrs. Mowbray—"by us at least: we were told that you were abroad—that you could not be here."

"You were rightly informed, Madam," replied Ranulph. "I was unlooked for, not by you

alone, but by all. I only arrived this evening from Bordeaux."

"From Bordeaux!" exclaimed Eleanor.

"From Château La Rivière, on the Garonne," replied Ranulph.

"Château La Rivière!" echoed Eleanor, in surprise. "And so you visited the dear old house? Were you aware who had been its inhabitants?"

"I was, dear Eleanor," replied Ranulph; "I have resided there during the last two months."

"Indeed!" said Mrs. Mowbray. "And Madame Derville and her husband——"

"Were well, when I departed."

"I am delighted to hear it. And how did you contrive to find out the house?—you must tell me all about it, dear Ranulph."

"Not now, Eleanor," interrupted Mrs. Mowbray—"you forget."

"I did, indeed, forget," said Eleanor, saddening.

"We must depart," said Mrs. Mowbray, addressing Ranulph. "We are staying with the Davenhams, at Braybrook, and shall remain there. Adieu."

"My days of mourning will be broken by painful yet necessary duties, which will not admit delay," returned Ranulph; "I will ride there to-morrow. There is much on which I would consult you all. I would have ventured to request the favour of your company at the Hall, had the occasion been other than the present."

"And I would gladly have accepted your invitation, had the season been more suitable, Sir Ranulph," returned Mrs. Mowbray; "I would gladly see that house again. During your father's lifetime I could not approach it; now you are owner of the mansion, it will delight me much to behold it once more. 'Tis a fine old house!—You are lord of broad lands, Sir Ranulph—a goodly inheritance."

"Madam!"

"And a proud title, which you will grace well, I doubt not. The first, the noblest of our house, was he from whom you derive your name. You are the third Sir Ranulph; the first founded the house of Rookwood; the next advanced it—'tis for you to raise its glory to its acme."

"Alas! Madam, I have no such thought."

"And wherefore not?—you are young—you are wealthy—you are powerful. With such demesnes as those of Rookwood—with such a title as its lord can claim, nought is too high to aspire to."

"I aspire to nothing, Madam, but your daughter's hand; and even that I will not venture to solicit until you are acquainted with——" and he hesitated.

"With what?" asked Mrs. Mowbray.

"Dear Ranulph—for mercy's sake—not now—speak not of it now—" interrupted Eleanor.

"A singular, and to me most perplexing

event hath occurred to-night," replied Ranulph, "which may materially affect my future fortunes."

"Your fortunes!" echoed Mrs. Mowbray, "Doth it relate to your mother?"

"No, Madam, not to her, to another!"

"Ha! what other?"

"Do not—pray do not press this matter further now, dear mother," said Eleanor, "you distress him."

"You shall know all to-morrow," said Ranulph.

"Ay, to-morrow, dear Ranulph," said Eleanor; "and whatever that morrow may bring forth, it will bring happiness to me, so you are bearer of the tidings."

"Dear Eleanor!"

"I shall expect your coming with impatience," said Mrs. Mowbray.

"And I," said Major Mowbray, who had listened thus far in silence, "would offer you my services fully, in any way you think they would

be useful to you. Command me as you think fitting."

"I thank you heartily," returned Ranulph. "To-morrow you shall learn all. Meanwhile it will be my business to investigate the truth or falsehood of the statement I have heard, ere I report it to you."

"Till then farewell!" said Eleanor.

"Farewell!" replied Ranulph.

As they issued from the church it was grey dawn. Mrs. Mowbray's carriage was at the door. The party entered it; and, accompanied by Doctor Small, whom he found within in the vestry, Ranulph walked towards the Hall, where a fresh surprise awaited him.

CHAPTER IV.

Black Will. Which is the place where we're to be concealed?
Green. This inner room.
Black Will. 'Tis well. The word is, "Now I take you."
ARDEN OF FEVERSHAM.

LEAVING Ranulph Rookwood on his way to the Hall, we shall now revert to the captive.

Guarded by the two young farmers, who had displayed so much address in seizing him, Luke was conveyed in safety to the small chamber in the eastern wing, destined, by Mr. Coates, to be his place of confinement for the night. The room, or rather closet, opening from another room, was extremely well adapted for the pur-

pose for which it was chosen, having no perceptible outlet; being defended, on either side, by thick partition walls of the hardest oak, and at the extremity, by the solid masonry of the mansion. It was, in fact, a remnant of the building anterior even to the first Sir Ranulph's day; and the narrow limits of Luke's cell had been erected long before the date of his earliest progenitor. Having seen their prisoner safely bestowed, the room was carefully examined—every board sounded—every crevice and corner peered into by the needle eye of the little lawyer, and nothing being found insecure, the light was removed—the door locked—the rustic constables dismissed, and a brace of pistols loaded, and laid on the table, Mr. Coates pronounced himself thoroughly satisfied, and quite comfortable.

"Comfortable!" Titus heaved a sigh, as he echoed the word—it found no echo in his heart. He felt any thing but comfortable. His heart

was with the body all the while. He thought of the splendour of the funeral—the torches—the illumined church—his own dignified march down the aisle, and the effect he expected to produce amongst the bewildered rustics. He thought of all these things, and cursed Luke by his Gods. The sight of the musty old apartment, hung round with faded arras, which, as he said, "smelt of nothing but rats and ghosts, and such like varmint," did not serve to inspirit him; and the proper equilibrium of his temper was not completely restored until the entrance of the butler into the room, with all the requisites for the manufacture of punch, afforded him some prospective solace.

"And what are they all about now, Tim?" asked Titus.

"They are all carousing," answered the domestic; "Doctor Small is just about to pronounce the funeral 'ration."

"Devil take it," replied Titus, "there's

another miss—Couldn't I just slip out, and see that?"

"By no means," said Coates. "Consider, Sir Ranulph is there."

"Well, well," said Titus, heaving a deep sigh, and squeezing a lemon—"are you sure this is biling water, Tim? You know I'm mighty particular."

"Certain, Sir."

"Ah, Tim, do you recollect the way I used to brew for the ould Squire, with a bit of fruit at the bottom of the glass? And then to think that, after all, I should be left out of his funeral—it's the very height of barbarity. Tim, this rum of your's is poor stuff—there's no punch worth the trouble of drinking, but whiskey—a glass of right potheen, straw-colour, peat-flavour, ten degrees over proof, would be the only thing to drown my cares. Any such thing in the cellar? There used to be an odd bottle or so, Tim?"

"I've a notion there be," returned Timothy. "I'll try the old bin, and if I can lay hands upon one, your honour shall have it, you may depend."

The butler departed, and Titus, emulating Mr. Coates, who had already enveloped himself, like Juno, in a cloud, proceeded to light his pipe.

Luke, meanwhile, had been left alone, without light. He paced about his narrow prison; a few steps was all its space afforded; until, wearied with the fruitless exertion, he at length sat down. He had much to meditate upon, and with nought to check the current of his thoughts, nought to distract his attention, in silence, in solitude, and in darkness, he pondered deeply upon his past, his present situation, and his future prospects. The future was gloomy enough—the present fraught with danger. And now that the fever of excitement was passed, he severely reproached himself for his precipitancy. "Had I acted with common prudence," mur-

mured he, "I might have been sure of success—of an easy triumph—I might have burst upon them, with proofs such as they could not have resisted; but for the paltry gratification of a weak revenge upon that scornful woman, I have endangered all—perchance destroyed all. I am in her toils, and I doubt not she will make good her threats; there is but one chance. I have a friend, I see, within the house. I thought I knew his face, when his eye was first fixed upon me. What doth he here? He hath promised me aid, and may find means for my liberation; that is all I need. Once free, the rest were easy; and yet to be freed by him—to be again brought into contact with that desperate band—I, the undoubted, the acknowledged, for even *she* acknowledges me the heir to Rookwood, ought not to connect myself, as I shall inevitably be connected, with them, in the event of this attempt succeeding. Of necessity I shall be again involved with them. I will not take even liberty from *them*. Each way I turn, new difficulties assail me. I

will abide the worst. Let them prosecute me—the assault upon Hugh Badger was committed in self-defence. I fear not that—and yet she said well, how can I legally exculpate myself? There were poachers within the park at the same time—a buck was slain ere I was pursued. I shall go distracted. I have been altogether imprudent. What if I temporise? what if I have recourse to wily stratagem? No, my soul rejects such means. I will pursue a straight forward course, and trust, for success, to a good cause and honest endeavours. I will think no more of this—perplex myself no longer. To what end is it? Events arise that I cannot foresee, or, if I foresaw, could not avert. It is evident that some great end is to be accomplished, and what that end may be, rests in the hand of Destiny, of which we are the puppets—why else should we be drawn hither? Ranulph, by a voice from out the grave—I, by a call as dread. Again we are confronted, before the body of our father—it may be accident, but accident

that takes the aspect of fatality; and if fatality it be, why struggle—why not resign myself to the dark headlong stream, and let it bear me to the golden strand, or overwhelm me in its tide? why not do this? Because, though fate may have decreed, restless human nature will ever strive to exercise its own free-will—and though its efforts are impotent, yet are they incessant.

"Amid all this darkness—this despair—this doubt—there is one star that smiles from the heaven of love upon me, it is thine, sweet Sybil—who, if all else forsake me, will not forsake me. Amidst my inquietude thy image has oft presented itself, and now comes, like a soothing spirit, to minister peace to my lone heart."

Thus did Luke commune with himself, until his mind, by degrees, assumed a more tranquil state; and, exhausted with his great previous fatigue, he threw himself upon the floor of his prison-house, and addressed himself to slumber. The noise he made induced Coates to enter the room, which he did with a pistol in each hand,

followed by Titus, with a pipe and candle; but finding all safe, the sentinels retired.

"One may see, with half an eye, that you're not used to a feather bed, my friend," said Titus, as the door was locked. "By the powers but he's a tall chap, any how—why his feet almost touches the door. I should say that room was a matter of six feet long, Mr. Coates."

"Exactly."

"Well, that's a good guess. Curse that ugly rascal, Tim; he's never brought the whiskey yet; but I'll be even with him to-morrow. Couldn't you just see to the prisoner for ten minutes, Mr. Coates?"

"Not ten seconds. I shall report you, if you stir from your post."

Here the door was opened, and Tim entered with the whiskey.

"Ah, by my soul, Tim, and here you come at last—uncork it man, and give us a thimble-full—blob—there goes the stopper—here's a glass"—smacking his lips—"whist Tim, another

drop—stuff like this will never hurt a body. Mr. Coates, try it—no—I thought you'd be a man of more taste."

"I must limit you to a certain quantity," replied Coates, "or you will not be fit to keep guard—another glass must be the extent of your allowance."

"Another glass! and do you think I'll submit to any such iniquitous proposition?"

"Beg pardon, gentlemen," said Tim; "but her ladyship desires me to tell you both, that she trusted you would keep the strictest watch upon the prisoner. I have the same message also from Sir Ranulph."

"Do you hear that?" cried Coates.

"And what are they all about now, Tim?" asked Titus.

"Just starting, Sir—they're all getting ready," returned Tim; "and, indeed, I must not lose my time gossipping here, for I be wanted now. You must be pleased to take care of yourselves, gentlemen, for an hour or so, for there will be

only a few women-kind left in the house. The storm's just over, and the men are all lighting their torches. Oh, its a grand sight!" And off set Tim.

"Bad luck to myself, any how," ejaculated Titus; "this is more than I can bear—I've had enough of this watch and ward business—if the prisoners tirs, shoot him, if you think proper—I'll be back in an hour."

"I tell you what, Mr. Tyrconnel," said Coates, coolly, taking up the pistol from the table, "I'm a man of few words, but those few are, I hope, to the purpose, and I'd have you to know that if you stir from that chair, or attempt to leave the room, dammee if I don't send a brace of bullets after you. I'm serious, I assure you;" saying which, he cocked the pistol.

Titus attempted no further reply; but deliberately filled himself a glass of whiskey and water.

"That's your last glass," said the inexorable Coates.

To return once more to Luke. He slept uneasily for some short space, and was awakened by a sound which reached his dreaming ears, and connected itself with the visions that slumber was weaving around him. He imagined that he was again within the vault of his ancestors, alone —no, not alone, for he was presently joined by a pallid figure, flitting towards him, which he knew to be the shade of his mother. It arose from out the obscurity of the tomb, and was whiter in its aspect even than he saw it in its shroud; but the attire was the same—the long black dishevelled hair—the sere-clothes—all but the eyes, which were open—which seemed to live—to beam with unearthly lustre—those eyes were fixed upon him with melancholy fondness. A lurid light appeared to permeate the chamber, emanating from a small globe of bluish flame, that burnt on the summit of the warrior's marble casque. By this light, Luke could perceive a huge coffin, and near it a throng of shadows. His mother extended her arm—with desperate

courage he was about to take it, when he perceived it was without a hand—he withdrew his own, shuddering. The figure stretched out its right hand—he took it—the chill went to his heart. Together they advanced to the coffin—the shadows retired. Inscribed upon the lid he read his father's name. He felt the cold hand clasp him—he stiffened with the icy embrace. Near him gleamed the phantoms of his ancestry. A stern race they had been called; but visages so inexorably fierce he had never beheld—the smile of demons could not be more withering. His mother hovered around him, and they paused—infernal fury was depicted in the features of each. A crackling, rumbling sound was now heard within his father's coffin—the leaden cover heaved and rose, and in the agony of horrible expectancy, Luke awoke.

It was some moments before he could shake off the effect produced by this dream—before he could remember where he was. He would not venture to sleep again, though he felt impelled

by drowsiness—there was a fixed pain at his heart, as if circulation were suspended. Changing his posture, he raised himself upon one arm—he then became aware of a scratching noise, somewhat similar to the sound he had heard in his dream, and perceived, what he had not before noticed, a light gleaming through a crevice in the oaken partition. His attention was immediately arrested, and placing his eye close to the chink, which had probably been originally occasioned by the warping of the wood, could distinctly perceive a dark lantern burning; and, by its light, a man filing some implement of housebreaking. The light fell before the hard features of the man, with whose countenance Luke was familiar; and although only one person came within the scope of his view, Luke could make out, from a muttered conversation that was carried on, that he had a companion. The parties were near to him, and though speaking in a low tone, Luke's quick ear caught the following:—

"D—n the darkey*," said he of the file—"I can't see the teeth of this here handsaw, and sharp they must be, or I shall never cut through the plate-chest in time—Where's the jemmy†, and the kate‡?—Softly, softly, thoul't never larn judgment, Dick Wilder—Don't I tell thee that that curs'd law-lurcher is keeping watch in the next room, and it won't do to disturb 'em just now? We must ramshackle the house first, before we think of tackling him."

"Well, for my part," replied Wilder, "I can't see no use in meddling with that business; but, however, Jack Palmer will have it so, and he's in a manner our Captain, and we must obey him. That youngster's not like one of us—he's one of your upright men—one of your Romany patterers§, and not one of the regular spice-gloak lay‖; for my part, I should leave him to the care of his old lockeram jaw'd grand-dad; but, as I said before, Jack's will is law—

* Dark lantern. † Iron crow. ‡ Pick-lock.

§ Gipsy. ‖ Highwaymen.

besides, we owe him a good turn—we shall have a prize to-night—thanks to his management—I've already got my share of the lurries*—and you've pocketed a few—eh, Bob?"

"Ay, but nothing to what we shall have—there's a mint o' money, and a power of plate, besides jewels, beyond all price, in the old lady's room. She do keep all lock'd up in her strong box—as Jack have found out. I stole there myself, to have a look at the place aforehand, and were just creeping towards her chamber, when I seed the old Lady and this here Luke Bradley make their appearance. I heard her screeching; but, as you may suppose, I didn't stay for much questioning, but hop'd the twig in a twinkling."

"You might have saved us all this trouble, if you had remained," returned Wilder.

"Ay, but it would'nt fadge then—but what keeps Jack?" We're all ready for the fakement

* Booty.

—pops primed—and I tell you what, Rob Rust, I've made my fi'penny* as sharp as a razor, and damme if that 'ere old woman gives me much of her jaw, or offers any resistance, if I don't spoil her talking in future, never blame me."

Suppressed laughter, from Rust, followed this speech. That laugh made Luke's blood run cold within his veins.

"Harkee, Dick, you're a reg'lar out and outer —you stops at nothing—and may I be d—d if I'd think any more of it than yourself, Dick; but Jack's as squeamish of bloodshed as young miss, that cries at her cut finger. It's the safer plan. Say what thou wilt, nothing but *that* will stop a woman's tongue."

"I shall make short work with her to-night. Hist! here Jack comes."

A footstep was heard in the room, and, presently afterwards, exclamations of surprise, and smothered laughter, were heard from the parties

* Clasp-knife.

"Bravo, Jack—famous. That disguise would deceive the devil himself."

"And now, my lads," said the new-comer, "is all bob?"

"Right and tight."

"Nothing forgotten?"

"Nothing."

"The sack?"

"Here."

"The rook* ?"

"Here."

"The crape?"

"In our kelps†."

"Done to the nines. Now off with your stamps‡, and on with your list slippers—not a word. Follow me, and, for your lives, don't move a step, but as I direct you. The word must be, 'Sir Piers Rookwood calls.' We'll overhawl the swag here, when the speak§ is spoken over. This crack‖ may make us all for life; and if

* Crow-bar. † Hats. ‡ Shoes. § Burglary. ‖ Ditto.

you'll follow my directions implicitly, we'll do the trick in style. This slum must be our rendezvous, when all's over; for hark ye, my lads, I'll not budge an inch till Luke Bradley be set free. He's an old friend, and I always stick by old friends. I'd do the same for one of you, so damn you, no flinching; besides, I owe that spider-shank'd, snivelling, split-cause Coates, who stands sentinel, a grudge, and I'll pay him off, as Paul did the Ephesians. You may crop his ears, or slit his tongue, as you would a magpie's, or any other chattering varmint; make him sign his own testament, or treat him with a touch of your *Habeas Corpus* Act, if you think proper, or give him a taste of blue plumb*. One thing only I stipulate, that you don't hurt that fat, mutton-headed Broganeer, whatever he may say or do; he's a devilish good fellow. And now to business.

Saying which, they noiselessly departed; but,

* Ball.

carefully as they closed the door, Luke's ear could detect the sound. They were gone—what was he to do?—the house would be robbed. The immediate attack would be directed to Lady Rookwood; in case of resistance, she would be murdered; and that this was no idle supposition, the character of the men too well assured him. And then, with hands, perhaps, dripping with her blood, they would return, to release him from prison; in reality, the master of the house, after they had despoiled it. His blood now chilled with horror—now boiled with indignation. An entire revulsion had been produced in his feelings, within the last four-and-twenty hours. Every thing was seen through a different medium; and that which the outcast, Luke Bradley, would have viewed with almost indifference, was regarded with horror by Sir Luke Rookwood. A spirit, new dawning, was at work within; the spark was lighted, which new events helped to fan to flame. And yet, how was he to act—how convey information—how render assistance? He

was in confinement. Would those who were watching over him hasten to Lady Rookwood, in case he urged it? It was clear they would not; they would not credit his affirmation—would treat it with derision—as an idle story, to give himself a chance of escape. He stamped the ground, chafing like the enraged lion, and feeling, as all must have felt, who have been so situated, with the will, but not the power, to assist another—a sensation almost approaching to torture. At this moment a distant scream burst upon his ears—another—he hesitated no longer. With all his force he thundered at the door.

"What do you want, rascal?" cried Coates, from without.

"There are robbers in the house."

"Thank you for the information. There is one I know of already."

"Fool, they are in Lady Rookwood's room—run to her assistance."

"A likely story, and leave you here."

"Do you hear that scream?"

"Eh, what—what's that?—I do hear something."

Here Luke dashed with all his force against the door. It was burst open, and he stood before the astonished Attorney.

"Advance a footstep, villain," said Coates, presenting both his pistols, "and I lodge a brace of balls in your head."

"Listen to me," said Luke; "there are robbers in the house—they are in Lady Rookwood's chamber—they will plunder the place of every thing—perhaps murder her. Fly to her assistance, I will accompany you—assist you—it is your only chance."

"*My* only chance—*your* only chance; do you take me for a green-horn? This is a poor subterfuge; could you not have vamped up something better? But back to your own room, or I shall make no more of shooting you, than I would of snuffing that candle."

"Be advised, Sir—I warn you—Lady Rook-

wood herself will throw all the blame on you. There are three of them—give me a pistol, and fear nothing."

"Give *you* a pistol! Ha, ha—to be its mark myself. You are an amusing rascal, I will say."

"Sir, I tell you not a moment is to be lost. Is life nothing? she may be murdered."

"I tell you, once for all, it won't do; go back to your room, or take the consequence."

"But it shall do, any how," exclaimed Titus, flinging himself upon the Attorney, and holding both his arms; "you've bullied me long enough—I'm sure the lad's in the right."

Luke snatched the pistols from the hands of Coates.

"Very well, Mr. Tyrconnel; very well, Sir;" cried the Attorney, boiling with wrath, and spluttering out his words—"Extremely well, Sir; you are not perhaps aware, Sir, what you have done; but you will repent this, Sir—repent, I say—repent was my word, Mr. Tyrconnel."

"Repent be d——d," replied Titus.

"Follow me," cried Luke; "settle your disputes hereafter. Quick, or we shall be too late."

Coates bustled after him, and Titus, putting the neck of the forbidden whiskey bottle to his lips, and gulping down a hasty mouthful, snatched up a rusty poker, and followed the party with more alacrity than might have been expected from a personage so portly.

CHAPTER V.

Gibbet. Well, gentlemen, 'tis a fine night for our enterprise.
Hounslow. Dark as hell.
Bagshot. And blows like the devil.
Boniface. You'll have no creature to deal with but the ladies.
Gibbet. And I can assure you, friend, there's a great deal of address, and good manners, in robbing a lady. I am the most of a gentleman, that way, that ever travelled the road.

BEAUX STRATAGEM.

ACCOMPANIED by her son, Lady Rookwood, on quitting the chamber of the dead, returned to her own room. They were alone. She renewed all her arguments—had recourse to passionate supplications—to violent threats; all were ineffectual. Ranulph maintained profound silence. He listened with melancholy attention, but replied not. Passion, as it often doth, defeated its own ends; and Lady Rookwood, seeing the ill effect her anger would probably

produce, gradually softened the asperity of her manner, and suffered Ranulph to depart.

Left to herself, and to the communings of her own troubled spirit, her fortitude, in a measure, forsook her, under the pressure of the difficulties that seemed to press on all sides. There was no plan she could devise—no scheme adopt, unattended with extremest peril. She must act alone—with promptitude, with decision, with secrecy: to win her son over was her chief desire, and that, at all hazards, she was resolved to do. But how?—She knew but of one point upon which he was vulnerable—one weak part on which the citadel of his firm soul was accessible—one link by which she could enchain him. His love for Eleanor Mowbray was that link. By raising doubts in his mind, and showing fresh difficulties, she would compel him to acquiesce in her machinations, as a necessary means of accomplishing his own object. This she wished to effect, but still she doubted; there was a depth of resolution in the placid stream

of Ranulph's character, which she had already often fathomed. She knew his firmness, and she dreaded that his sense of justice should be stronger than his passion, ardent though she knew the latter to be. But the trial should be made. If unsuccessful, she had yet another plan, not to be resorted to until the last extremity, and that so dreadful, that we scarce venture to hint at it.

Her thoughts were next directed to Luke. He was now within her grasp. Her hand could reach him—could crush him. Nothing but his blood could appease her thirst of vengeance—he should die; but the means must be subtle—to be secure, must be slow; her eager hand would willingly have dealt the blow at once—would have ministered the deadly draught ere the morrow's dawn, had nought stood between her and her enemy. This tortuous course she deemed best to pursue; yet even though imminent peril forbade her, though she felt assured of arriving at the same dark end by a more circuitous route, though her schemes were such as her victim

could not elude, her first impulse was to give way to instant vengeance. She checked that thought, ere it was fully formed—she pursued every maze—she traversed every path that was to lead to the ultimate object—revenge; she examined the security of every link of the net she had thrown around her prey—she exulted in the anticipation of her ultimate triumph over him. He should perish by the hangman's hands, or, 'scaping that, should fall by her own. She could reach him, she knew well, even in the dungeon's depths.

As she wove these webs of darkness, fear, hitherto unknown, took possession of her soul. She listened to the howling of the wind—to the vibration of the rafters—to the thunder's roar, and to the hissing rain; till she, who never trembled at the thought of danger, became filled with apprehension and vague uneasiness. There are moments of irresolution which must be experienced, even by those whose nerves are strung as with steel. Though the spirit would fain maintain its supremacy o'er the body's weakness, that

mysterious and inexplicable sympathy, which subsists between them, affects both in a like degree, and we feel that, although endowed with immortal essences, we are still creatures of clay, and subject to physical infirmity. Such, at this moment, was the condition of Lady Rookwood: her soul was strong, stedfast, unyielding, but her frame, exhausted from over anxiety, and the violent excitement of the recent occurrences, in which she herself had been a principal actress, had the effect of debilitating her mental energy, and rendered her a prey to a thousand nameless terrors. She summoned her attendant, Agnes. The old handmaiden remarked the perturbed manner of her mistress, but made no comment. Lights were ordered; and when Agnes returned, Lady Rookwood fixed a look so wistful upon her, that she ventured to address her. Agnes trembled as she spoke—

"Bless you, my Lady, but you look very pale, and no wonder. I feel sick at heart, too. It's all over, and he is gone to his account—poor

master! he who feared so much to die—and then such a night as it is for his funeral! Oh, my Lady, I shall be glad when they return from the church, and happier still when the morning dawns—I can't sleep a wink—can't close my eyes, but I think of him."

"Of *him*?"

"Of Sir Piers, my Lady; for though he's dead, I don't think he's gone."

"How?"

"Why, my Lady, the corruptible part of him's gone, sure enough; but the incorruptible, as Doctor Small calls it—the sperrit, my Lady—it might be my fancy, your Ladyship; but as I'm standing here, when I went back into the room just now for the lights, as I hope to live, I thought I saw Sir Piers in the room.

"You are crazed, Agnes."

"No, my Lady, I'm not crazed—it was mere fancy, no doubt; but I thought I saw him. Oh, it's a blessed thing to live with an easy conscience—a thrice blessed thing to *die* with an

easy one, and that's what I never shall, I'm afeard. Poor Sir Piers! I'd mumble a prayer for him, if I durst."

"Hence—leave me," said Lady Rookwood.

Agnes left the room.

"What, if the dead can return?" thought Lady Rookwood. "All men doubt it, yet all men believe it. *I* would not believe it, were there not a creeping horror that overmasters me, when I think of the state beyond the grave—that intermediate state, for such it must be, betwixt heaven or hell, when the body lieth mouldering in the ground, and the soul survives, to wander, unconfined, until the hour of doom. And doth the soul survive when disenthralled? Is it a dependent of the body? Doth it not perish with the body? These are doubts which I cannot resolve; but did I deem that there were no weal eternal, nor eternal woe, this hand should at once liberate me from my own weaknesses—my fears—my life. There is but one path to acquire that knowledge, which taken, can never be retraced. I am content to

live—while living, to be feared; it may be, hated—when dead, to be contemned—yet still remembered. Ha—what sound was that?—a stifled scream!—Agnes!—without there!—she hears me not—she is full of fears—I am not free from them myself, but I will shake them off. This will divert their channel," drawing from out her bosom the marriage certificate. "This will arouse the torpid current of my blood—'*Piers Rookwood to Susan Bradley.*'—And by whom solemnized? The name is Checkley—Richard Checkley—ha, I bethink me—a papist priest—a recusant—who was for some time concealed in the house. I have heard of this man—he was afterwards imprisoned, but escaped—he is either dead, or in a foreign land. No witnesses—'tis well! Methinks Sir Piers Rookwood did well to preserve this—it shall light his funeral pyre—would he could now behold me, as I consume it."

She held the paper in the direction of the candle; but, ere it could touch the flame, it dropped from her hand. As if her horrible

wish had been granted, before her stood the figure of her husband! Lady Rookwood started not. No sign of trepidation or alarm, save the sudden stiffening of her form, was betrayed. Her bosom ceased to palpitate—her respiration stopped—her eyes were fixed upon the apparition.

The figure moved not, but regarded her sternly. It was at some little distance, within the shade cast by the lofty bedstead. Still she could distinctly discern it; it was no ocular deception; it moved—it was attired in the costume Sir Piers was wont to wear—his hunting dress. All that her son had told her, rushed to her recollection. The phantom advanced; its countenance was pale, and wore a gloomy frown.

"What would you destroy?" asked the apparition, in a hollow tone.

"The evidence of——"

"What?"

"Your marriage."

"With yourself, accursed woman?"

"With Susan Bradley."

"With her?" shouted the figure, in an altered tone—"With *her*—married to her! then Luke is legitimate, and heir to this estate!" Uttering which, the apparition rushed to the table, and secured the document. "A marriage certificate!" it ejaculated—"here's a piece of luck! By the triple tree of St. Gregorie, but this is a prize worth drawing—it ain't often in our lottery life we pick out a ticket like this. One way or the other, this must turn up a few cool thousands."

"Restore that paper, villain," exclaimed Lady Rookwood, recovering all the audacity natural to her character, the instant she discovered that the intruder was mortal—"restore it, or, by heaven, you shall rue the hour in which you dared——"

"Softly, softly," replied the pseudo-phantom, with one hand pushing back the lady, while the other conveyed the precious document to the custody of his nether man, giving the buckskin pocket a slap—"two words to that, my Lady.

I know its value as well as yourself, and *must* make my market. The highest offer has me, your Ladyship; he's but a poor auctioneer, that knocks down his ware to the first bidder. Luke Bradley may come down more handsomely with the stumpy."

"Who are you, ruffian, that take the guise of Sir Piers Rookwood? To what end is this masquerade assumed? If for the purpose of terrifying me into compliance with the schemes of that madman, Luke Bradley, whom I presume to be your confederate, your labour is mis-spent —*your* stolen disguise has no more weight with me than *his* forged claims."

"Forged claims. Damme, he must be a prime faker*, to have forged that. But your Ladyship is in error—Luke Bradley is no confederate of mine."

"Both are robbers. You steal from the father —he from the son."

* Forger.

"Come, my Lady, these are hard words—I have no time to bandy talk. What money have you in the house?—be alive."

"You *are* a robber, then?"

"Robber!—Not I—I'm a tax-gatherer—a collector of *Rich-Rates*—Ha, ha! But come. What plate have you got? Nay, don't be alarmed—take it quietly—these things can't be helped—better make up your mind to it without more ado—much the best plan—no screaming—it may injure your lungs, and can alarm nobody. Your maids have done as much before—it's beneath *your* dignity to make so much noise. So, you will not heed me? As you will." Saying which, he deliberately cut the bell cord, and drew out a brace of pistols at the same time.

"Agnes!" shrieked Lady Rookwood, now seriously alarmed.

"I must caution your Ladyship to be silent," said the robber, who, as our readers will no doubt have already conjectured, was no other than

the redoubted Jack Palmer. Cocking a pistol, "Agnes is already disposed of," said he. "However like your deceased 'Lord and master' I may appear, you will find you have got a very different *spirit* from that of Sir Piers to deal with. I am, naturally, the politest man breathing—have been accounted the best bred man on the road, by every lady whom I have had the honour of addressing; and I should be sorry to sully my well-earned reputation by any thing like rudeness. But I know the consequence of my character, and must, at all hazards, support it. I must use a little force, of the gentlest kind. Perhaps you will permit me to hand you to a chair—bless me, what a wrist your ladyship has got. Excuse me if I hurt you; but you are so devilish strong. Curse me if I ever thought to be mastered by a woman. What, ho! 'Sir Piers Rookwood calls'——"

"Ready," cried a voice.

"That's the word," echoed another; "Ready."

—And, immediately, two men, their features entirely hidden by a shroud of black crape—accoutred in rough attire, and each armed with pistols, rushed into the room.

"Lend a hand," said Jack.

Even in this perilous extremity, Lady Rookwood's courage did not desert her. Anticipating their purpose, ere her assailants could reach her, she extricated herself from Palmer's grasp, and rushed upon the foremost so unexpectedly, that before the man could seize her, which he endeavoured to do, she snatched a pistol from his hand, and presented it at his head with a fierceness of aspect, like that of a tigress at bay—her eye wandering from one to the other of the group, as if selecting a mark.

There was a pause of some few seconds, in which the men looked at the lady, and then at their leader. Jack looked blank.

"Hem!" said he, coolly—"This is something new—disarmed—defied by a petticoat. Hark ye,

Rob Rust; the disgrace rests with you. Clear your character, by securing her at once. What! afraid of a woman?"

"A woman!" repeated Rust, in a surly tone; "devilish like a woman indeed. Few men could do what she have done. Give the word, and I fire; but as to seizing her, that's more than I'll engage to do.

"Then damn you for a coward," said Jack. "Seize her I will—I will steer clear of blood—if I can help it. Come, Madam, surrender, like the more sensible part of your sex, at discretion. You will find resistance of no avail;" and he stepped boldly towards her.

Lady Rookwood drew the trigger. The pistol flashed in the pan. She flung away the useless weapon, without a word.

"Ha, ha!" said Jack, as he leisurely stooped to pick up the pistol, and approached her Ladyship—"the bullet is not yet cast, that is to be my billet. Here," added he, dealing Rust a heavy thump upon the shoulder with the butt

end of the piece—"take back your snapper, and look you prick the touch-hole, or your barking iron will never bite for you. And now, Madam, I must take the liberty of again handing you to a seat. Dick Wilder, the cord—quick. It distresses me to proceed to such lengths with your Ladyship—but safe bind, safe find, as Mr. Coates would say."

"You will not bind me, ruffian."

"Indeed, but your Ladyship is very much mistaken—I have no alternative—your Ladyship's wrist is far too dexterous to be at liberty. I must furthermore request of your Ladyship to be less vociferous—you interrupt business, Madam, which should be transacted with silence and deliberation."

Lady Rookwood's rage and vexation at this indignity were beyond all bounds. Resistance, however, was useless, and she submitted, in silence. The cord was passed tightly round her arms, when it flashed upon her recollection, for the first time, that Coates and Tyrconnel,

who were in charge of her captive in the lower corridor, might be summoned to her assistance. This idea had no sooner crossed her mind than she uttered a loud and protracted scream.

"Damnation!" cried Jack—"civility is wasted here. Give me the gag, Rob?"

"Better slit her squeaking pipe, at once," replied Rust, drawing his clasp knife—"she'll thwart every thing."

"The gag, I say—not *that*."

"I can't find the gag," exclaimed Wilder, savagely. "Leave Rob Rust to manage her—he'll silence her, I warrant you, while you and I rummage the room."

"Ay, leave her to me," said the other miscreant. "Go about the room, and take no heed—her hands are fast—she can't scratch—I'll do it with a single gash—send her to join her Lord, whom she loved so well, before he's under ground. They'll have something to see, when

they come home from the master's funeral—their mistress *cut and dry* for another.—Ho, ho !"

" Mercy, mercy !" shrieked Lady Rookwood.

" Ay, ay, I'll be merciful," said Rust, brandishing his knife before her eyes. " I'll not be long about it. Leave her to me—I'll give her a taste of Sir Sydney*."

" No, no, Rust—by God, you shan't do that," said Jack, authoritatively—" I'll find some other way to gag the jade."

At this moment a noise of rapid footsteps was heard within the passage.

" Assistance comes," screamed Lady Rookwood. " Help ! help !"

" To the door," cried Jack. The words were scarcely out of his mouth, before Luke dashed into the room, followed by Coates and Tyrconnel.

Palmer and his companions levelled their pistols at the intruders, and the latter would have fired, but Jack's keen eye having discerned

* Clasp knife.

Luke amongst the foremost, checked further hostilities for the present. Lady Rookwood, meanwhile, finding herself free from restraint, had rushed towards her deliverers, and crouched beneath Luke's protecting arms, which were extended, pistol in hand, over her head. Behind them stood Titus Tyrconnel flourishing the poker, and Mr. Coates, who, upon the sight of so much warlike preparation, began somewhat to repent having rushed so precipitately into the lion's den.

"Luke Bradley!" exclaimed Palmer, stepping forward.

"Luke Bradley!" echoed Lady Rookwood, recoiling, and staring into his face.

"Fear nothing, Madam," cried Luke. "I am here to assist you—I will defend you with my life."

"*You* defend *me!*" exclaimed Lady Rookwood, as in doubt.

"Even *I*," cried Luke; "strange as it may sound."

"Holy powers protect me!" ejaculated Titus. "As I live, it is Sir Piers himself."

"Sir Piers!" echoed Coates, catching the infection of terror, as he perceived Palmer more distinctly. "What! is the dead come to life again?—a ghost—a ghost!"

"A ghost!" echoed Titus. "By my soul, it's the first ghost I ever heard of, that committed a burglary on its own house, and the night of the body's burial too. But what the devil are these with it? may be they're ghosts likewise."

"They are," said Palmer, in a hollow tone, mimicking the voice of Sir Piers, "attendant spirits. We are come for this woman—her time is out—so no more palavering, Titus, but lend a hand to take her to the church-yard, and be d——d to you."

"Upon my conscience, Mr. Coates," cried Titus, "it's either the devil, or Sir Piers. We'll be only in the way here. He's only just setting his old scores with his Lady. I thought it would come to this, long ago."

Jack took advantage of the momentary confusion, created by this incidental alarm at his disguise, to direct Rust towards the door by which the new comers had entered; and, this being accomplished, he burst into a loud laugh.

"What! not know me," cried he—"not know your old friend with a new face, Luke? nor you, Titus? nor you, who can see through a millstone, Lawyer Coates, don't you recognise——"

"Jack Palmer, as I'm a sinner," cried Titus. "By the powers, and so it is. Why, Jack, honey, what does this mane? Is it yourself I see in such company? You're not robbing in arnest?"

"Indeed but I am, friend Titus," exclaimed Jack; "and *it is* my own self you see. I just took the liberty of borrowing Sir Piers's old hunting coat from the justice room. You said my toggery would'nt do for the funeral. I'm no other than plain Jack Palmer, after all."

"With half a dozen aliases at your back, I dare say," cried Coates. "*I* suspected you all along—all your praise of highwaymen was not lost upon me. No, no—*I* can see into a millstone, be it ever so thick."

"Well;" replied Jack—"I'm sorry to see you here, friend Titus; but keep quiet, and you shall come to no harm. As to you, Luke Bradley, you have anticipated my intention by half an hour; I meant to set you free. For you, Mr. Coates, you may commit all future care of your affairs to your executors, administrators, and assigns. You will have no further need to trouble yourself with worldly concerns," levelling a pistol at the Attorney, who, however, shielded himself, in an ecstacy of apprehension, behind Luke's person. "Stand aside, Luke," said Jack.

"I stir not," replied Luke. "I thank you for your good intention, and will not injure you—that is, if you force me not to do so. I am here to defend her Ladyship."

"What's that you say?" returned Jack, in surprise—"*defend* her Ladyship?"

"With my life," replied Luke. "Let me counsel you to depart."

"Are you mad? Defend *her*—Lady Rookwood—your enemy—who would hang you? Tut, tut! Stand aside, I say, Luke Bradley, or look well to yourself."

"You had better consider well, ere you proceed," said Luke. "You know me of old—I have taken odds as great, and not come off the vanquished."

"The odds are even," cried Titus, "if Mr. Coates will but show fight—I'll stand by you to the last, my dear joy—you're the right son of your father, though on the wrong side. Och! Jack Palmer, my jewel, no wonder you drank to the memory of Redmond O'Hanlon."

"You hear this?" cried Luke.

"Hot-headed fool!" muttered Jack.

"Why don't you shoot the mad cull on the spot, and be d——d to him?" said Dick Wilder.

"And mar my own chance?" thought Jack; "no, that will never do—his life is not to be thrown away. Be quiet," said he, in a whisper, to Wilder; "I've another card to play, which shall serve us better than all the plunder here. No harm must come to that youngster—his life is worth thousands to us." Then turning to Luke, he continued, "I'm loth to hurt you, but what can I do?—you must have the worst of it if we come to a pitched battle. I therefore advise you, as a friend, to draw off your forces. We are three to three; but two of *your* party are unarmed."

"Unarmed!" interrupted Titus, "Devil burn me, but this iron shillelah shall convince you to the contrary, Jack, or any of your friends."

"Make ready then, my lads," cried Jack.

"Stop a minute," exclaimed Coates; "this gets serious—this will end in homicide—in murder—we shall all have our throats cut, to a certainty; and though they will as surely be

hanged for it, that will be but poor satisfaction to the sufferers. Had we not better compromise this matter?"

"Be silent!" said Luke.

"I'm for fighting it out," said Titus, whisking the poker round his head, like a flail in action: "my blood's up. Come on, Jack Palmer, I'm for you."

"I should vote for retreating," chattered the Attorney, "if that cursed fellow had not placed a *ne exeat* at the door."

"Give the word, captain," cried Rust, impatiently.

"Ay—ay," echoed Wilder.

"A skilful general always parleys," said Jack. "A word in your ear, Luke, ere that be done which cannot be undone."

"You mean me no treachery?" returned Luke.

"Treachery!" exclaimed Jack, disdainfully, uncocking his pistols, and putting them into his pocket.

"Shoot him as he advances," whispered Coates; "he is in your power now."

"Scoundrel!" replied Luke, "do you think me as base as yourself?"

"Hush, hush! for God's sake don't expose me," said Coates.

"Curse me if I know what all this means," muttered Wilder; "but if he don't finish the matter quickly, I'm d——d if I don't take the settling of it into my own hands."

Lady Rookwood had apparently listened to this singular conference with sullen composure, though in reality she was racked with anxiety as to its results; and, now apprehending that Palmer was about to make an immediate disclosure to Luke, she accosted him as he passed her.

"Unbind me!" cried she, "and what you wish shall be your's—money—jewels——"

"Ha! may I depend?"

"I pledge my word."

Palmer untied the cord, and Lady Rookwood, approaching a table whereon stood the

escritoir, touched a spring, and a secret drawer flew open.

"Do you this of your own free will?" asked Luke. "Speak, if it be otherwise."

"I do," returned the Lady, hastily.

Palmer's eyes glistened at the treasures exposed to his view.

"They are jewels, of countless price. Take them—and rid me," she added, in a whisper, "of *him*."

"Luke Bradley?"

"Ay."

"Give them to me."

"They are thine, freely, on those terms."

"You hear that, Luke," cried he aloud; "you hear it, Titus—this is no robbery. Mr. Coates—'Know all men by these *presents*.'—I call you to witness, Lady Rookwood gives me these pretty things."

"I do," returned she; adding, in a whisper, "on the terms which I proposed."

"Must it be done at once?"

"Without an instant's delay."

"Before your own eyes?"

"I fear not to look on—each moment is precious—you need but draw the trigger—he is off his guard now—you do it, you know, in self-defence."

"And you?"

"For the same cause."

"Yet he came here to aid you?"

"What of that."

"He would have risked his life for your's?"

"I cannot pay back the obligation. He must die!"

"The document?"

"Will be useless then."

"Will not that suffice?—why aim at life?"

"You trifle with me. You fear to do it."

"*Fear!*"

"About it, then—you shall have more gold."

"I will about it," cried Jack, throwing the casket to Wilder, and seizing both Lady Rookwood's hands.—"I am no Italian bravo,

Madam—no assassin—no remorseless cut-throat. What are you—devil or woman, that ask me to do this? Luke Bradley, I say."

"Would you betray me?" cried Lady Rookwood.

"You have betrayed yourself, Madam.—Nay, nay, Luke, hands off. See, Lady Rookwood, how you would treat a friend. This strange fellow, here, would blow out my brains for laying a finger upon your ladyship."

"I will suffer no injury to be done to her," said Luke; "release her."

"Your Ladyship hears him," said Jack. "And you, Luke, shall learn the value set upon your generosity. You will not have *her* injured. This instant she hath proposed, nay, paid for *your* assassination."

"How?" exclaimed Luke, recoiling.

"A lie as black as hell," cried Lady Rookwood.

"A truth as clear as heaven," returned Jack: "I will speedily convince you of the fact."—Then turning to Lady Rookwood, he whispered —"Shall I give him the marriage document?"

"Beware!" said Lady Rookwood.

"Do I avouch the truth, then?"

She was silent.

"I am answered," said Luke.

"Then leave her to her fate," cried Jack.

"No," replied Luke; "she is still a woman, and I will not abandon her to ruffianly violence. Set her free."

"You are a fool," said Jack.

"Hurrah, hurrah!" cried Coates, who had rushed to the window—"Rescue, rescue!—they are returning from the church—I see the torch-light in the avenue—we are saved!"

"Hell and the devil!" cried Jack, "Not an instant is to be lost. Alive, lads—bring off all the plunder you can—be handy!"

"Lady Rookwood, I bid you farewell," said Luke, in a tone in which scorn and sorrow were blended. "We shall meet again."

"We have not parted yet," returned she; "will you let this man pass? A thousand pounds for his life."

"Upon the nail?" asked Rust.

"By the living God, if any of you attempt to touch him, I will blow his brains out upon the spot, be he friend or foe," cried Jack. "Luke Bradley, *we* shall meet again. You shall hear from me."

"Lady Rookwood," said Luke, as he departed, "I shall not forget this night."

"Is all ready?" asked Palmer, of his comrades.

"All."

"Then budge."

"Stay," said Lady Rookwood, in a whisper to him. "What will purchase that document?"

"Hem."

"A thousand pounds?"

"Double it."

"It *shall* be doubled."

"I will turn it over."

"Resolve me now."

"You shall hear from me."

"In what manner?"

"I will find speedy means."

"Your name is Palmer?"

"Palmer is the name he goes by, your Lady-ship," replied Coates; "but it is a fashion with these rascals to have an alias."

"Ha—ha," said Jack, thrusting the ramrod into his pistol barrel, as if to ascertain there was a ball within it; "are you there, Mr. Coates? —Pay your wager, Sir."

"What wager?"

"The hundred we bet, that you would take me, if ever you had the chance."

"Take *you*—it was Dick Turpin I betted to take."

"*I* am DICK TURPIN—that's my alias, replied Jack."

"Dick Turpin! then I'll have a snap at you, at all hazards," cried Coates, springing suddenly towards him.

"And I at you," said Turpin, discharging his pistol right in the face of the rash Attorney— "there's a quittance in full."

END OF BOOK THE SECOND.

BOOK III.

The Gipsy.

Lay a garland on my hearse,
  Of the dismal yew;
Maidens, willow branches bear,—
  Say I died true.
My love was false, but I was firm
  From my hour of birth;
Upon my buried body lie
  Lightly, gentle earth!

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

BOOK THE THIRD.

CHAPTER I.

I had a sister, who among the race
Of gipsies was the fairest. Fair she was
In gentle blood, and gesture to her beauty.

BROME.

THERE is a freshness in the first breath of new-awakened day (what time

—— the dapple-grey coursers of the dawn
Beat up the light with their bright, silver hoofs,
And chase it through the sky,)

so inspirating and life-giving, that even severest fatigue will yield to its invigorating influence. Braced by the keen, thin air, then in its greatest purity, and refreshed, almost as if by slumber, the toil-worn frame suddenly shakes off its

languor, and prepares for renewed exertion; while the sympathetic spirit, heretofore depressed in its energies, recovers, at once, its elasticity, and, like the lark, soars upwards, attuning itself to gladness. So was it with Luke, as (after his escape from the Hall) he inhaled the breath of the autumnal morning, and felt himself inspired with new vigour and animation. For the last two days and nights, his had been a life of vast bodily exertion and intense mental disquietude; and, with the exception of a few hours of repose, stolen at the cottage of Peter Bradley (where he had passed the day after his adventure with the keeper), and the disturbed slumber snatched during his confinement at the Hall, he had known no rest. His strength, in consequence, was fast giving way, when the fresh matin breeze, like the elixir of youth, poured a new current into his veins.

On quitting Lady Rookwood's chamber, Luke speeded along the gloomy corridor, descended the spiral stairs, and, swiftly traversing

sundry other dark passages, issued from a door at the back of the house. Day was just beginning to break. His first object had been to furnish himself with means to expedite his flight; and, perceiving no one in the yard, he directed his hasty steps towards the stable. The door of the building was fortunately unfastened; and, entering, he found a strong roan-coloured horse, which he knew, from description, had been his father's favourite hunter, and to the use of which he now considered himself fully entitled. The animal roused himself as he approached, shook his glossy coat, and neighed as if he recognised the footsteps and the voice that addressed him.

"Thou art mistaken, old fellow," said Luke; "I am not he thou thinkest; nevertheless I am glad thy instinct would have it so. If thou bearest my father's son as thou hast borne my father, o'er many a field for many a day, he need not fear the best mounted of his pursuers. So ho! come hither, Rook."

The noble steed turned at the call. Luke

hastily equipped him, vaulted upon his back, and, disregarding every impediment in the shape of fence or ditch, that he might avoid encountering any one returning from the church, shaped his course across the fields towards the Sexton's cottage, which he reached just as its owner was in the act of unlocking his door. Peter testified his delight and surprise at the escape of his grandson, by a greeting of his wonted chuckling laughter.

"Ha, ha!—free—escaped!" exclaimed he.—"Who hath delivered thee from the hands of the Moabites?—Who hath holpen thee from the hammer of Jael?—Hadst thou not reason, like Holofernes, to fear the sword of Judith? Ha, ha! But why do I ask? Who could have done this, but he who calleth himself Palmer? I was plotting some scheme of tardy deliverance, and lo! he hath done it at once."

"My own hands have set me free," returned Luke. "I am indebted to no man for my liberty—still less to *him*. But I cannot tarry here; each moment is precious. I came hither,

to request of you to bear me company to the gipsy encampment. Your presence is needful—will be most useful. In a word, will you go, or not?"

"And mount behind thee?" replied Peter; "I like not the conveyance."

"Farewell, then;" and Luke turned to depart.

"Stay: that is Sir Piers's horse, old Rook; I care not if I ride him."

"Quick then—mount."

"I will not delay thee ten seconds," rejoined the Sexton, opening his door, and throwing his implements into the cottage. "Back Mole—back, Sir," cried he, as the dog rushed out to greet him. "Bring your steed nigh this stone, grandson Luke—there—a little nearer—all's right," and away they galloped.

The Sexton's first inquiries were directed to ascertain how Luke had accomplished his escape; and, having satisfied himself in this particular, he was content to remain silent; musing, it might be, on the incidents which had been detailed to him.

The road Luke chose, was a rough unfrequented lane, which skirted, for nearly a mile, the moss-grown palings and thick plantations of the park. It then diverged to the right, and seemed to bear towards a range of hills rising in the distance. High hedges impeded the view on either hand; but there were occasional gaps, affording glimpses here and there of the tract of country through which he was riding. Meadows were seen steaming with heavy dews, intersected by a deep channelled stream, whose course was marked by a hanging cloud of vapour, as well as by certain low, melancholy, pollard-willows, that stood like stripped, shivering urchins by the river side. Other fields succeeded, yellow with golden grain, or bright with flowering clover (the autumnal crop), coloured with every shade, from the light green of the turnip to the darker verdure of the bean, the various products of the teeming land. The whole was backed by round drowsy masses of trees.

Luke spake not, nor abated his furious course, till the road began to climb a steep ascent. He

then drew in the rein, and from the heights of the acclivity stayed to survey the plain over which he had passed.

It was a rich agricultural district, with little of the picturesque, but having much of true English endearing beauty and loveliness to recommend it. Such a quiet, pleasing landscape, in short, as one views, at such a season of the year, from every eminence in every midland county of our merry Isle. The picture was made up chiefly of a tract of land, as we have just described, filled with corn ripe for the sickle, or studded with sheaves of the same golden produce, enlivened with green meadows, so deeply luxuriant as to claim the scythe for the second time; each divided from the other by thick hedge-rows, the uniformity of which were broken ever and anon by some towering elm, or wide branching oak. Many old farm houses, with their broad barns and crowd of haystacks (forming little villages in themselves), ornamented the landscape at different points, and by their substantial look, gave evidence of the fertility of the soil, and of the

thriving condition of its inhabitants. Some three miles distant might be seen the scattered hamlet of Rookwood; the dark russet thatch of its houses scarce perceptible amongst the embrowned foliage of the surrounding timber. The site of the village was, however, pointed out by the square tower of the antique church, which crested the summit of the adjoining hill; and although the Hall was entirely hidden from view, Luke readily traced out its locality, amidst the depths of the dark grove in which it was embedded.

This goodly prospect had other claims to attention in Luke's eyes besides its agricultural or pictorial merit. It was, or he deemed it was, his own; for far as his eye ranged, yea, even beyond the line of vision, the estates of Rookwood extended.

"Dost see yon house below us, in the valley?" asked Peter, of his companion.

"I do," replied Luke; "a snug old house—a model of a farm—every thing looks comfortable and well to do about it—there are a dozen

lusty haystacks, or thereabouts; and the great barn, with its roof yellowed like gold, looks built for a granary; and there are stables and kine-houses, and orchards, and dove-cots, and fish ponds, and an old circular garden, with wall fruit in abundance. He should be a happy man, and a wealthy one, who dwells therein."

"He dwells therein no longer," returned Peter—"he died last night."

"He died last night!" echoed Luke. "How knowest thou that? None are stirring in the house, as yet."

"The owner of that house, Simon Toft," replied Peter, "was last night struck by a thunderbolt. He was one of the coffin-bearers at thy father's funeral. They are sleeping within the house, thou sayest. 'Tis well. Let them sleep on—they will awaken too soon, wake when they may—ha, ha!"

"Peace," cried Luke; "thou blightest every thing—even this smiling landscape thou wouldst turn to gloom. Doth not this morn awaken a happier train of thoughts within thy mind?

With me it maketh amends for want of sleep—it effaceth resentment, and banisheth every black misgiving. 'Tis a joyous thing, thus to scour the country at earliest dawn—to catch all the spirit and freshness of the morning—to be abroad before the lazy world is half awake—to make the most of brief existence—and to have spent a day of keen enjoyment, almost before the day begins with some; of such enjoyment as he can never know who, chained by the fetters of sleep, only issues forth when the sun is high in heaven. I like to anticipate the rising of the glorious luminary—to watch every line of light changing, as at this moment, from shuddering grey to fervent blushing rose! See how the heavens are dyed! Who would exchange yon gorgeous spectacle," continued Luke, pointing towards the East, and again urging his horse to full speed down the hill, endangering the Sexton's seat, and threatening to impale him upon the crupper of the saddle, "who would exchange that sight, and the exhilarating feeling of this fresh morn, for a

couch of eider down, and a head-ache in reversion?"

"I for one," returned the Sexton, sharply, "would willingly exchange it for that or any other couch, provided it rid me of this accursed crupper, which galleth me sorely. Moderate thy pace, grandson Luke, or I must throw myself off the horse, in self-defence."

Luke slackened his charger's pace, in compliance with the Sexton's wish.

"Ah—well," continued Peter, restored in a measure to comfort; "now I can contemplate the sunrise, which thou laudest, somewhat at mine ease. 'Tis a fine sight, I doubt not, to the eyes of youth; and, to the sanguine soul of him upon whom life itself is dawning, is, I dare say, inspiriting: but when the hey-day of existence is past—when the blood flows sluggishly in the veins—when one has known the desolating storms which the brightest sunrise has preceded, the seared heart refuses to trust its false glitter; and, like the experienced sailor, sees oft in the brightest skies a forecast of the tempest.

To such a one, there can be no new dawn of the heart—no sun can gild its cold and cheerless horizon—no breeze revive pulses that have long since ceased to throb with any chance emotion. Even such am I.—I am too old to feel freshness in this nipping air; it chills me more than the damps of night, to which I am accustomed. Night—midnight, is my season of delight. Nature is instinct then with secrets dark and dread; there is a language which he who sleepeth not, but will wake, and watch, may haply learn. Strange organs of speech hath the Invisible World—strange language doth it talk—strange communion doth it hold with him who would pry into its mysteries. It talks by bat and owl—by the grave-worm, and by each crawling thing—by the dust of graves, as well as by those that rot therein—but ever doth it discourse by night, and 'specially when the moon is at the full. 'Tis the lore that I have then learnt, that makes that season dear to me. Like your cat, mine eye expands in darkness—I blink at the sunshine, like your owl."

"Cease this forbidding strain," returned Luke; "it sounds as harshly as thy own screech-owl's cry. Let thy thoughts take a more sprightly turn, more in unison with my own and with the fair aspect of nature."

"Shall I direct them to the gipsies' camp, then?" said Peter, with a sneer. "Do thine own thoughts tend thither?"

"Thou art not altogether in the wrong," replied Luke; "I *was* thinking of the gipsies' camp, and of one who dwells amongst its tents."

"I knew it," replied Peter. "Didst thou think to deceive me, by attributing all thy joyousness of heart to the dawn? Thy thoughts have been wandering all this while upon one who hath, I will engage, a pair of sloe-black eyes, an olive skin, and yet withal a clear one—black, yet comely, 'as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon'—a mesh of jetty hair, that hath entangled thee in its net-work—ripe lips, and a cunning tongue—one of the plagues of Egypt.—Ha, ha!"

"Thou hast guessed shrewdly," replied Luke;

"I care not to own to thee that my thoughts were so occupied."

"I was assured of it," replied the Sexton. "And what may be the name of her towards whom thy imagination was straying?"

"She is one of the tribe of Lovel, on the mother's side."

"Of the tribe of Lovel?" echoed Peter.

"Grandchild of that Barbara Lovel, whom thou sayest performed the rites of embalmment on my mother's remains."

"Her grandchild!—How is she called?"

"Sibila Perez," replied Luke. "Her father was a Spanish Gitano. She is known amongst her people by her mother's name of Lovel."

"Beautiful, no doubt?"

"She *is* beautiful," replied Luke; "how beautiful thou shalt judge presently."

"I will take your word for it," returned the Sexton; "and you love her, doubtlessly?"

"Passionately."

"You have loved her long?"

"Years."

"You are not married?" asked Peter, hastily.

"Not as yet," replied Luke; "but my faith is plighted. I will raise her to my state."

"To your state!" echoed the Sexton, in a tone of deep scorn. "Ha, ha!—What would then be your state? Marry in madness, as your father did before you, and then *cut through* the knot you cannot otherwise untie. You are a Rookwood, and I say to you 'beware.'—Again I tell you, you must abandon this wench."

"And break her heart?"

"Women's hearts are not so readily broken: the stuff is suppler than thou deemest. But grant it should be so, it were better for thee she should perish now than hereafter."

"For what dost thou take me?—What evil thing art thou?" cried Luke, reining in his steed, and regarding him with a look of horror and disgust, not unmixed with apprehension.

"Thy grandsire—thy counsellor—thy friend," returned Peter, with a sinister smile. "Thou art, I have already said, a Rookwood, and as

such I offer thee advice grounded on experience, which thou wilt do well not to reject. Thy father I knew; thy father's father, and others of thy family; and with the annals of all thy race am I acquainted. Thy father's son I also know, and I tell thee, Luke, there are seeds of pride in thy composition, which will grow up in as short a space as grains of mustard to towering trees. Once Sir Luke Rookwood in possession, and mark the change! Impulses that now but feebly sway thy character, may then determinately affect it, and pride amongst the foremost.—Even now, methinks, I discern some difference in thee, of which thou thyself can scarce be unconscious. Be advised by me in this matter: approve thyself first, ere thou art fully committed. 'Tis for her sake I speak."

"For *her* sake!" echoed Luke, disdainfully.

"Ay, for her sake. Better she be the jilted mistress than the despised wife; for thou wouldst hate her *then* in the proportion that thou lovest her *now*. She would be a bar to thy honourable

advancement in the world—a blot in thy splendour abroad—a bane to thy happiness at home. Thou art a Rookwood—thou art yet untried—thou hast not passed through the fiery furnace—through the terrible ordeal of matrimony—thou knowest not the fuel that lies ready to be kindled at thy heart. With thee to marry Sybil will be to repent—to repent, to loathe——to loathe, to——"

"Peace," thundered Luke, "or by heaven I will throw thee beneath my horse's hoofs."

"And destroy one who boldly speaks what another would hesitate to avouch? 'Tis thus well-meant advice is ever treated. Had I counselled thee to wed her, thou wouldst have accounted me thy friend; but because I point out the only course thou couldst with honour or with safety pursue, thou wouldst trample me beneath thine horse's heels. Why should I be silent, when I may work great good by open speech? Am I not more nearly interested in thy welfare than any other? Am I influenced by any sordid feeling? Am I not entitled, as

a sufferer by an alliance equally disproportionate and wretched, as thou knowest, to exclaim against this? Pursue it, I tell thee, and thou wilt repent it.—Hast thou no other liking?"

"None."

"Didst thou never love another?"

"Mine is no wandering heart. Where it liketh, it abideth."

"By what troth were ye betrothed together?"

"By the true troth of hearts that before heaven pledge themselves each to the other."

"Be it so then, and may the heaven that hath registered your vow, bless your nuptials."

"Is that thy wish?"

"If it must be so. I would have thee wedded, though not to Sybil."

"And whom wouldst thou select?"

"One before whom her beauty would pale as stars at day's approach."

"There lives not such a one."

"Trust me there does—Eleanor Mowbray is lovely beyond parallel. But I was merely speculating upon a possibility, when I wished her

thine—it is scarce likely she would cast her eyes upon thee."

"I shall not heed her neglect. Yet, graced with my title, I doubt not, were it my pleasure to seek a bride amongst those of gentle blood, I should not find all indifferent to my suit."

"Possibly not. But what might weigh with others, would not weigh with her. There are qualities thou lackest, which she has discovered in another."

"In whom?"

"In Ranulph Rookwood."

"Is he her suitor?"

"I know not; but I have found out the secret of her heart."

"And thou wouldst have me abandon my own betrothed love, to beguile from my brother his destined bride?"

The Sexton answered not, and Luke fancied he could perceive a quivering in the hands that grasped his body for support. There was a brief pause in their conversation.

"And who is Eleanor Mowbray?" asked Luke, breaking the silence.

"Thy cousin. On the mother's side a Rookwood. 'Tis therefore I would urge thy union with her. There is a prophecy relating to thy house, which seems as though it would be fulfilled in thy person and in her's.

When the stray Rook shall perch on the topmost bough,
There shall be screeching and screaming I trow;
But of right, and of rule, of the ancient nest,
The Rook that with Rook mates shall hold him possest.

The stray Rook is thyself—that I need not tell. The Rook that with Rook shall mate, may be Ranulph. He may wed Eleanor Mowbray, and the estates shall pass away from thy hands."

"I place no faith in such fantasies," replied Luke; "and yet the lines bear strangely upon my present situation."

"Their application to thyself," returned the Sexton, "and to her is unquestionable and precise."

"It would seem so, indeed," rejoined Luke, and he sank into abstraction, from which the Sexton, for some space, did not care to arouse him.

Peter had judged his grandson truly. A

change was at work within him, some intimations of which Luke had himself experienced, but he knew not its extent, until probed by the Sexton's reckless hand. He became suddenly alive to the painful conviction, and started at the sight of the precipice to which he was hastening with headlong speed. He felt he could not retreat; and yet that leap, once taken, he feared his peace of mind was gone. He had not dared to think of Sybil, except in moments of extreme peril, when hope for a while was clouded. Then it was that her image cheered him. Now that his prospects were again fair, she stood like an obstacle in his path. He reproached himself for this dereliction—he sought in vain to arouse his better feelings. His passion was ardent as ever; but he was not engrossed, as heretofore, by that passion. Pride struggled for mastery with love, and in the end might, he feared, obtain the victory. When a suspicion of his mistress's inferiority once enters the lover's mind, his passion, we may rest assured, is on the wane. Love, like death, is a leveller of all distinctions:

it will admit of none—will perceive none; and when affection and worldly degree are put in comparison by the lover himself, it is not difficult to foretell by which the scales will be turned.

> —— Love's kingdom is founded
> Upon a parity; lord and subject,
> Master and servant, are names banished thence.
> They wear one fetter all, or all one freedom*.

Annoyed with himself, and angry at the unexpected insight into his own heart, which had been afforded him, Luke began to regret that he had ever sought out his grandsire as a companion of his journey, and wished him safely back at his own cottage. He was in no mood tranquilly to endure the further persecution which the Sexton intended him.

"One question more, and I have done?" exclaimed Peter, abruptly renewing the conversation.

"What wouldst thou ask? To whom relates thy question?"

"To Sybil."

* CARTWRIGHT.

"Name her not—thou dost it but to torture me."

"Yet answer me," persisted Peter. "Thou hast loved her long, thou sayest. With thee to love must be to love madly, desperately. With her, being of gipsy blood, commingled with the fiery current which she deriveth from her Spanish parentage, love can be no tame regard."

"Tame regard!" echoed Luke. "She is the daughter of a wild race, who love with an ardour which those who dwell in cities can never equal. Love with them is an intense passion."

"And, like the prophet's rod, swalloweth up all lesser emotions—as pride, revenge, remorse. That is not thy case, Luke. No matter; she loved thee passionately—you have wandered together for years. Could hearts so framed for each other, endure the torture of unrequited love for such a period? With inclination to prompt—opportunity to grant—it were unreasonable to suppose otherwise! She is not of a chilly race, thou sayest?"

"What mean you to insinuate?"

"Nay, I make all allowances."

"Allowances!"

"Youth, blood, passion, all conspiring, it is not to be marvelled at."

"Darest thou to hint——"

"That she is thy mistress—wherefore not? Things more improbable have come to pass. I hold the offence too lightly, to blame thee for it."

"I warn thee to be silent."

"Canst thou deny it?"

"My hand is upon thy throat," exclaimed Luke, furiously seizing his grandsire by the collar.

"To answer my question, were better than to use violence," returned Peter.

"Listen to me then," replied Luke, withdrawing his hold, and with difficulty restraining his indignation; "thou who scoffest at woman's love, and holdest her chastity in derision, and learn that, placed by circumstances in a situation of doubt and peril—surrounded by wild and lawless companions—loving with an ardour

and devotion passionate and fervent as ever agitated the bosom of woman—the fame of Sybil is as pure as mountain snow. Since boyhood have I known her — since boyhood loved her. Ah! well do I remember when I saw her first; well do I recall the memory of that moment. She stands before me as she stood a child. A fairy creature, cast in beauty's mould, with glowing cheeks, radiant with warmth and bloom—that rich bloom that paints the cheek of the brunette—eyes large, and dark, and full of fire and tenderness—lips vivid as carnation; and even then, with rich tresses that fell to her little rounded ancles! I know not how soon my love burst into raging flame, but the spark was kindled then. Thou knowest that I, an infant, was committed to the care of Barbara Lovel. She brought me up as one of her own children. While I was yet a boy, Sybil returned with her dying mother from Toledo. Her father had been a gipsy contrabandist; he was shot by the carabineers in the sierras in the neighbourhood of that city. Her mother

had suffered a martyrdom at the Inquisition, chiefly for her daughter's sake. She died soon after her return to this country. The care of Sybil consequently devolved on Barbara. She, as thou art aware, rules the gipsy people as their queen. Her power and influence extended to Sybil and myself. We lived apart from the others, yet I was not altogether estranged. Many a wild adventure have I engaged in with the company—many a merry feat performed! But let that pass. As Sybil grew in years, she grew in beauty. Her eyes caught new fire from the sun; her cheeks a warmer glow; her locks a jettier dye; her lips a richer carnation. My love grew in proportion. Heavens! and what a love was mine—*was*—ah!—*thou* smilest and *I* sigh—accursed be that smile—and yet I know not why I sigh. It is not as it was wont to be. There is more of sadness than of ecstasy in thus hurriedly retracing those bright and happy hours. Surely I am not, cannot be, the monster thou wouldst have me think myself. That vision of bliss rises before me like a Paradise, from which

I am self-exiled. Renounce Sybil! never, never. Away with thy accursed advice."

The Sexton answered not for some space; when he did, it was in a tone of cold irony.

"Advice," said he, "is always disagreeable; I never take it; seldom give it. If I esteemed you as lightly as I esteem all else; or rather, if I hated you as I hate all else, I would urge you to this match—I would bid you brave all customs—set all laws of society at nought, and despise them as they ought to be despised; (not that you could despise them, for your proud man, let him think what he will, breathes but the breath of others—is a shackled slave to other's opinions—and thou art already, or will be, a proud man, and then thou wilt no longer see with thine own eyes, or judge with thine own judgment); I would bid you do this, I tell you, frankly, because it would be to make you miserable; and think not hence, that I delight in misery, or am jealous of happiness. It is not so. But when I see folly lifting its hand against itself, or driving its mad chariot at

headlong speed, my hand shall never stay the blow, or put a spoke in the wheel. In such case my counsel would be, that thou shouldst wed Sybil. She is young—she is beautiful, I should say, and fair, I doubt not in thine eyes, though dark as an Ethiop in those of others. She will grace thy board. She will adorn thy name. The gipsy bride of Sir Luke Rookwood—there is romance in the title—and what needest thou to care, if high dames should say, that she lacks accomplishment, or breeding, education, all that is supposed to refine their sex? What if they, titled as she would be, were to shun her? thou needest not care for that. Avoid the society of women, and seek that of men: there are many, I doubt not, who would see no mote in thy wife's bright black eyes—no stain in her sun-burnt cheek."

"What fiend could have prompted me to link myself with a companion so pestilent?" muttered Luke; "but, thank heaven, 'tis only for a short space."

"True," replied the Sexton, "and thou

mayest profit by thy present affliction, if thou wilt, and turn this necessary evil to excellent account. Even I, you see, can moralize. Your present situation applieth forcibly to your future condition. Unwittingly you have saddled yourself with a troublesome companion, who sticketh to you like a burr, and whom you cannot shake off. There is, however, one drop of comfort in the cup—the journey, luckily, is short. Marry—and you will have a companion through the journey of life, equally, it may be, wearisome, undoubtedly as difficult to be disposed of."

Infuriated, as his own steed might have been by the sting of a summer hornet, and yet unable to free himself from his inexorable tormentor, Luke, as the animal would probably have done, sought refuge in flight, forcing his horse into its swiftest gallop; and though he still carried the galling cause of his disquietude along with him, he, by this means, effectually disarmed his pertinacity; as, in fact, Peter's sole attention was

now directed to the maintenance of his seat, which every instant, owing to the nature of the road, became more precarious.

The aspect of the country had materially changed since their descent of the hill. In place of the richly-cultivated district which lay on the other side, a broad brown tract of waste land was spread out before them, covered with scattered patches of gorse, stunted fern, and low brushwood, presenting an unvaried surface of unbaked turf, whose shallow coat of sod was manifested by the stones that clattered under the horse's hoofs as he rapidly traversed its arid breast, clearing with ease to himself, but not without creating alarm to the Sexton—every gravelly trench, natural chasm, or other inequality of ground that occurred in his course. Clinging to his grandson with the tenacity of a bird of prey fixing its talons in the sides of its quarry, Peter for some time kept his station in security; but, unluckily, at one dyke rather wider than the rest, the horse, owing possibly

to the mismanagement, intentional or otherwise, of its rider, swerved, and the Sexton, dislodged from his "high estate," fell at the edge of the trench, and rolled incontinently to the bottom.

Luke drew up, to inquire if any bones were broken, and Peter presently upreared his dusty person from the abyss into which he had fallen. Without condescending any reply, yet muttering curses, "not loud, but deep," Peter accepted his grandson's proffered hand, and remounted.

While thus occupied, Luke fancied he heard a distant shout, and noting whence the sound proceeded—the same quarter by which he had approached the heath—he beheld a single horseman, spurring in their direction, at the top of his speed; and to judge from the rate at which he advanced, it was evident he was any thing but indifferently mounted. Apprehensive of pursuit, Luke expedited the Sexton's ascent; and that accomplished, without bestowing further regard upon the

object of his solicitude, he resumed his headlong flight. He now, however, thought it necessary to bestow more attention to his choice of road, and, perfectly acquainted with the heath, avoided all unnecessarily hazardous passes; but in spite of his knowledge of the ground, and the excellence of his horse, the stranger sensibly gained upon him. The latter's steed carried no double burthen, and was no lagging hack; fleet as the wind it seemed, swift as an Arab of the desert. The danger, however, was no longer imminent.

"We are safe," cried Luke; "the limits of Hardchase are past. In a few seconds we shall enter Davenham Wood. I will turn the horse loose, and we will betake ourselves to flight amongst the trees. I will show thee a place of concealment. He cannot follow us on horseback, and on foot I defy him. He is but one man, 'tis true; but I would willingly avoid any encounter now, which, most probably, would terminate fatally."

"Stay," cried the Sexton. "He is not in pursuit—he takes another course—he wheels to the right. By heaven! it is the Devil himself upon a black horse, come for bow-legged Ben. See, he is there already."

The horseman had turned, as the Sexton stated, careering towards a revolting object, at some little distance on the right-hand. It was a gibbet, with its horrible burthen. He rode swiftly towards it, and reining in his horse, took off his hat, bowing profoundly to the carcase that swung in the morning breeze. Just at that moment a gust of air catching the fleshless skeleton, its arm seemed to be waved in reply to the salutation. A solitary crow wheeled over the horseman's head as he paused. After a moment's halt, he turned round, and again shouted to Luke, waving his hat.

"As I live," said the latter, "it is Jack Palmer."

"Dick Turpin, you mean," rejoined the Sexton. "He has been paying his respects to a

brother blade. Ha, ha! Dick will never have the honour of a gibbet; he is too tender of the knife. Did you mark the crow?—But here he comes."

And in another instant Turpin was by their side.

CHAPTER II.

I see a column of slow-rising smoke
O'ertop the lofty wood, that skirts the wild.
COWPER. THE TASK.

"THE top of the morning to you, gentlemen," said Turpin (for so we must in future designate our friend, Jack Palmer), as he rode up, at an easy canter. "Did you not hear my halloo? I caught a glimpse of you on the hill yonder,—I knew you both, two miles off; and so, having a word or two to say to you, Luke Bradley, before I leave this part of the country, I put Bess to it, and she soon brought me within hail. Bless her black skin," added he, affectionately patting his horse's neck, "there's not her match in these parts, no, nor in any other; she wants no coaxing, to do her

work—no bleeders for her. Often and often she's saved her master's colquarron* from being twisted! Black Bess is my best friend, my first favourite, and dearer to me than any Judy of them all, though I've no particular dislike to the women. But what blowen would do for me what she has done? No, no,—Black Bess before the world. I should have been up with you before this, had I not taken a cross cut, to look at poor Ben."

"The martyr!" ejaculated Peter.

"True, the martyr," echoed Jack, laughing: "many a man of less merit has met with canonization. Ben was a brave boy in his day. I like to see how long a man will last, under these circumstances. There was Will Davies, the Golden Farmer, who rattled merrily in his irons at Bagshot, for many a long year, I've heard say; and Holloway, who was gibbeted at Holloway, on the Highgate Road; and Jack Hawkins; and Ben Child (he who was

* Neck.

tucked up for the Bristol mail job); their bones are bleaching still; and Will the Waterman, who was hung in irons at the Isle of Dogs, he stood it out for years—I remember him. I've seen some dozens in my day. Curse those crows—I hate the sight of them. Dammee, if I don't shake my chains at 'em, if ever it's my lot to hang, like fruit, from the tree, and to dance a long lavolta to the music of the four whistling winds. No one shall pluck me with impunity.—Ha, ha! And now may I ask, whither are you bound, comrades?"

"Comrades!" whispered Peter to Luke, "You see *he* does not so easily forget his old friends."

"I have business which will not admit of delay," observed Luke; "and, to speak plainly—"

"You want not my society," returned Turpin; "I guessed as much. Natural enough! You have got an inkling of your good fortune. You have found out that you are a rich man's heir, not a poor wench's bastard. No offence. I'm a plain spoken man, as you will find, if you

know it not already. I have no objection to your playing these fine tricks on others, though it won't answer your turn to do so with me."

"Sir!" exclaimed Luke, sharply.

"Sir, to you," replied Turpin. "Sir Luke—as I suppose you would now like to be addressed. I am aware of all. A nod is as good as a wink to me. Last night I learnt the fact of Sir Piers's marriage from Lady Rookwood:—Ay, from her Ladyship. You stare,—and old Peter, there, opens his ogles now. But it was so—she let it all out by mistake; and I am in possession of what can alone substantiate your father's first marriage, and establish your claims."

"The devil!" cried the Sexton, adding, in a whisper to Luke, "You had better not be quite so precipitate in dropping so obliging an acquaintance."

"You are jesting," said Luke to Turpin.

"It is ill jesting before breakfast," returned Dick; "I am seldom in the mood for a joke so early. What, if a certain marriage certificate had fallen into my hand?"

"A marriage certificate!" echoed Luke and the Sexton simultaneously.

"The only existing proof of the union of Sir Piers Rookwood with Susan Bradley," continued Turpin. "What if I had stumbled upon such a document—nay more, if I knew where to direct you to it?"

"Had you not better condescend to renew your former intimacy?" whispered Peter.

"Peace," cried Luke, to his tormentor; and then addressing Turpin, "if what you say be true," said he, "my quest is at an end. All that I need, you appear to possess. Other proofs are but secondary to this. I know with whom I have to deal. What do you demand?"

"I demand nothing," said Turpin. "We will talk about the matter after breakfast. I wish to treat with you as friend and friend. Meet me on those terms, and I am your man; reject my offer, and I will turn my mare's head, and ride back to Rookwood. With me now rests all your hopes. I have dealt fairly with you, and I expect to be fairly dealt with, in return. It were

idle to say that now I have an opportunity I should not turn this luck to my advantage. I were a fool to do so. You cannot expect it. And then I have Rust and Wilder to settle with. I have left them behind, but they know my destination. We have been old associates. I like your spirit—I care not for your haughtiness:—but I will not help you up the ladder, to be kicked down afterwards. Now you understand me. Whither are you bound?"

"To Davenham Priory, the gipsy camp."

"The gipsies are your friends?"

"They are."

"I am alone."

"You are safe."

"You pledge your word that all shall be on the square. You will not mention to one of that canting crew what I have told you?"

"I cannot pledge myself to that—to one alone."

"To whom?"

"A woman."

"Bad! Never trust a petticoat."

"I will answer for her with my life."

"And for your grand dad there?"

"He will answer for himself," said Peter. "You need not fear treachery in me. Honour among thieves, you know."

"Or where else should you seek it?" returned Turpin, "for it has left all other classes of society. Your highwayman is your only man of honour. I will trust you both; and you shall find you may trust me. After breakfast, as I said before, we will bring the matter to a conclusion. Tip us your daddle, Sir Luke, and I am satisfied. You shall rule in Rookwood, I'll engage, ere a week be flown—and then—but so much parleying is dull work:—let's make the best of our way to breakfast."

And away they cantered.

A narrow bridle road conducted them singly through the defiles of a thick wood. Their route lay in the shade, and the air felt chilly amidst the trees, the sun not having attained sufficient altitude to penetrate its depths, while over-head

all appeared warmth and light. Quivering on the tops of the timber, the horizontal sunbeams created, in their refraction, brilliant prismatic colourings, and filled the air with motes like golden dust. Our horsemen heeded not the sunshine nor the shade; occupied each with his own train of thought, they silently rode on.

Davenham Wood, through which they urged their course, had, in the olden time, been a forest of some extent. It was then an appendage to the domains of Rookwood, but had passed from the hands of that family to those of a wealthy adjoining land-owner and lawyer, Sir Edward Davenham, in the keeping of whose descendants it had ever after continued.

A noble wood it was, and numbered many patriarchal trees. Ancient oaks, whose broad gnarled limbs the storms of five hundred years had vainly striven to uproot, and which were now sternly decaying,—gigantic beech-trees, whose silvery stems shot smoothly upwards, sustaining branches of such size, that each,

dissevered, would in itself have formed a tree, populous with leaves, and variegated with rich autumnal tints—the sprightly sycamore—the dark chestnut—the weird wych-elm—the majestic elm itself, festooned with ivy—every variety of wood, dark, dense, and closely interstrewn, composed the forest through which they rode. So multitudinous was the timber, so closely planted, so entirely filled up with a thick matted vegetation, which had been allowed to collect beneath, that little view was afforded, had any been desired by the present parties, into the labyrinth of the grove. Tree after tree, clad in the glowing livery of the season, was passed, and was as rapidly succeeded by others. Occasionally a bough projected over their path, compelling the riders to incline their heads, as they passed; but, heedless of such difficulties, Luke pressed on. Now the road grew lighter, and they became at once sensible of the genial influence of the sun. The transition was as agreeable as instantaneous. They had opened upon an extensive plantation

of full-grown pines, whose tall, branchless stems grew up like a forest of masts, and freely admitted the pleasant sun-shine. Beneath those trees, the soil was sandy, and destitute of all undergrowth, though covered with brown hair-like fibres and dry cones, shed by the pines. The agile squirrel, that freest denizen of the grove, starting from the ground, as the horsemen galloped on, sprang up the nearest tree, and might be seen angrily gazing at the disturbers of his haunts, beating the branches with his fore-feet, in expression of displeasure; the rabbit darted across their path; the jays flew screaming amongst the foliage; the blue cushat, scared at the clatter of the horses' hoofs, sped on swift wing into quarters secure from their approach; while the party-coloured pies, like curious village gossips, congregated to peer at the strangers, expressing their astonishment by loud and continuous chattering.

Though so gentle of ascent as to be almost imperceptible, it was still evident that the path they were following gradually mounted a hill

side; and when, at length, they reached an opening, the view thence showed the eminence they had insensibly won. Pausing for a moment upon the brow of the hill, Luke pointed to a stream that wound through the valley, and, tracing its course, indicated a particular spot amongst some trees. There was no indication of a dwelling-house—no cottage roof, no white canvas shed, to point out the tents of the wandering tribe whose abode they were seeking; and the only circumstance which showed that it had once been the haunt of man, were a few gray monastic ruins, scarce distinguishable from the stony barrier by which they were surrounded; and the only evidence that it was still frequented by human beings, was a thin column of pale blue smoke, which arose in curling wreaths from out the brake; the light-coloured vapour beautifully contrasting with the green umbrage from which it issued.

"Our destination is yonder," exclaimed Luke, pointing in the direction of the vapour.

"I am glad to hear it," cried Turpin, "as

well as to perceive there is some one awake. That smoke holds out a prospect of breakfast. No smoke without fire, as the old Lady Scanmag said, and I'll wager that that fire was not lighted for the fayter fellows* to count their fingers by. We shall find three sticks, and a black pot with a kid seething in it, I'll engage. These gipsy fellows have picked out a prettyish spot to quarter in—quite picturesque, as one may say —and but for that bit of smoke, which looks for all the world like a Dutch Skipper blowing his morning cloud, and which might tell an awkwardish tale to any one but a friend, no one need know of their vicinity. A pretty place, upon my soul."

The spot, in sooth, merited Turpin's eulogium. It was, as he observed, "quite picturesque." The gem of the scene was a little secluded valley, in the midst of wooded hills, so secluded indeed, that not a single habitation appeared in view, nor was there any further indication of

* Fortune-tellers.

their proximity than what we have described. Clothed with timber to the very summits, excepting upon the side whereon the party stood, which verged upon the declivity, these mountainous ridges presented a broken outline of foliage, variegated with masses of colour, of bright orange, umber, and deepest green. Four hills hemmed in the valley. Here and there a gray slab of rock might be discerned amongst the wood, and a mountain ash figured conspicuously upon a jutting crag immediately below them.

Deep sunken in the ravine, beneath where the horsemen had halted, concealed in part from their view by the wild herbage and dwarf shrubs, ran a range of precipitous rocks, severed, it would seem, by some diluvial convulsion, from the opposite mountain side, as a corresponding rift was there visible, in which the same dip of strata might be observed, together with certain ribbed cavities, matching huge bolts of rocks which had once locked these stony walls together. Washing this cliff,

swept a clear stream, well known and well regarded, as it waxed in width, by the honest brethren of the angle, who seldom, however, had tracked it to its rise amongst these hills. This stream found its way into the valley through a chasm far to the left, and rushed thundering down the mountain side, in a headlong cascade. The valley was approached in this direction from Rookwood by an unfrequented carriage road, which Luke had, from prudential reasons, avoided.

All seemed consecrated to silence—to solitude—to the hush of nature: yet was this quiet scene the chosen retreat of lawless depredators, and had erstwhile been the theatre of feudal oppression and priestly persecution. We have said that no habitation was visible; that no dwelling, tenanted by man, could be seen; but, following the spur of the most distant hill, some traces of a stone wall might be discovered; and, upon a natural platform of rock, stood a stern square tower, which had once been the donjon of the castle, the Lords of which

had called the four hills their own. A watch-tower then had crowned each mountain crest, every vestige of which had, however, long since disappeared. Sequestered in the vale below had also stood the Priory before alluded to (a Monastery of gray friars, of the Order of St. Francis), some part of whose venerable walls were still remaining; and if they had not reverted to the bat and owl, as is wont to be the fate of such fanes, their cloistered shrines were devoted to beings whose natures partook, in some measure, of the instincts of those creatures of the night—a people whose deeds were of darkness, and whose eyes shunned the light. Here the gipsies had pitched their tent; and though the place was often, in part, deserted by the vagrant horde, yet certain of the tribe, who had grown into years (over whom Barbara Lovel held queenly sway), made it their haunt, and were suffered, by the authorities of the neighbourhood, to remain there unmolested—a lenient piece of policy, which, in our infinite regard for the weal of the tawny tribe, we

recommend to the adoption of other justices, and knights of the shire.

Bidding his grandsire have regard to his seat, Luke leaped a high bank; and, followed by Turpin, began to descend the hill. Peter, however, took care to provide for himself. The descent was so perilous, and the footing so insecure, that he chose rather to trust to such conveyance as nature had furnished him withal, than to hazard the breaking of his neck by any false step of the horse. He contrived, therefore, to slide off from behind, shaping his own course in a more secure direction. As he watched his companions in their bold descent down the hill along the ledge of rocks, he could not help admiring their daring courage. He who has wandered amidst the Alps, must have often had occasion to witness the wonderful sure-footedness of that mountain pilot, the mule. He must have remarked how, with tenacious hoof, he will claw the rock, and drag himself from one impending fragment to another, with perfect security to his

rider—how he will breast the roaring currents of air, and stand unshrinking at the verge of almost unfathomable ravines. But it is not so with the horse: fleet on the plain, careful over rugged ground, he is timid and uncertain on the hill side, and the risk which was incurred by Luke and Turpin, in their descent of the almost perpendicular sides of the cliff, was tremendous. Peter watched them in their passage with some admiration, and with much contempt.

"He will break his neck, of a surety," said he; "but what matters it? as well now as hereafter."

So saying, he approached the verge of the precipice, where he could see them more minutely.

The passage along which Luke rode had never before been traversed by horse's hoof. Cut in the rock, it presented a steep zigzag descent amongst the cliffs, without any defence for the foot traveller, except such as was afforded by a casual clinging shrub, and no protection whatever existed for a horseman; the possibility

of any such attempting the passage not having, in all probability, entered into the calculation of those who framed it. Add to this, the steps were of such unequal heights, and withal so narrow, that little space was afforded to the passenger aforesaid to place the sole of his foot, and the danger to the rider was proportionately increased.

"The devil!" cried Turpin, staring downwards; "is this the best road you have got?"

"You will find one more easy," replied Luke, "if you ride for a quarter of a mile down the wood, and then return by the brook side. You will find me at the Priory."

"No, dammee!" answered the Highwayman, "if you go, I go too. It shall never be said that Dick Turpin was afraid to follow, where another would lead. Go on."

Luke gave his horse his head, and the animal slowly and steadily commenced the descent, fixing his fore-legs upon the steps, and drawing his hinder limbs carefully after him. Here it was that the lightness and steadiness of Turpin's

mare was completely shown. No Alpine mule could have borne its rider with more apparent ease and safety. Turpin encouraged her by hand and word; but she needed it not. The Sexton saw them: and, tracking their giddy descent, he became more interested than he anticipated. His attention was suddenly drawn towards Luke.

"He is gone," cried Peter. "He falls—he sinks—my plans are all defeated—the last link is snapped. No," added he, recovering his wonted composure, "his end is not so fated."

Rook had missed his footing. He rolled stumbling down the precipice a few yards. His rider's fate seemed inevitable. His feet were entangled in the stirrup; he could not free himself. A birch tree, growing in a chink of the precipice, arrested his further fall. But for this timely aid all had been over. Here Luke was enabled to extricate himself from the stirrup, and to regain his feet; seizing the bridle, he dragged his faulty steed back again to the road.

"You have had a narrow escape, by Jove

said Turpin, who had been thunderstruck with the whole proceeding. "Those d——d big cattle are always clumsy; devilish lucky it's no worse."

This difficulty was passed, only to be succeeded by another. It was now comparatively smooth travelling; but they had not as yet arrived in the valley, and it seemed to be Luke's object to take somewhat of a circuitous path. This, although he was unacquainted with the way, was so evident, that his companion could not help commenting upon it.

Luke evaded the question. "The crag is steep there," said he; "besides, to tell you the truth, I want to surprise them."

"Ho, ho!" laughed Dick. "Surprise them, eh? What a pity the birch tree was in the way; you would have done it properly then. Egad, here's another surprise."

Dick's last exclamation was caused by his having suddenly come upon a gully in the rock, through which dashed the cascade before alluded to. The road was good on either side; but the only bridge across the stream was a narrow

plank, along which it was impossible for horse to pass.

"You must have been mad, to come this road," cried Turpin, gazing down into the roaring depths in which the waterfall raged, and measuring the distance of the pass with his eye. "So, so, Bess.—Ay, look at it, wench. I'll be d——d, lad, if I think your horse will do it, and therefore turn him loose."

But Dick might as well have bidden the cataract to flow backwards. Luke struck his heels into his horse's sides. The steed galloped to the brink, snorted, and refused the leap.

"I told you so—he can't do it," said Turpin. "Well, if you are obstinate, a wilful man must have his way.—Stand aside, while I try it for you." Patting Bess, he put her to a gallop. She cleared the gulf bravely, landing her rider safely upon the opposite rock.

"Now then," cried Turpin, "for the other side of the chasm."

Luke again urged his steed. Encouraged

by what he had seen, this time the horse sprang across without hesitation. The next instant they were in the valley.

For some time they rode along the banks of the stream in silence. A sound at length caught the quick ears of the Highwayman.

"Hist!" cried he, "some one sings. Do you hear it?"

"I do," replied Luke, his blood rushing to his cheeks.

"And could give a guess at the singer, no doubt," said Turpin, with a knowing look. "Was it to hear yon woodlark that you nearly broke your own neck, and put mine in jeopardy?"

"Prithee be silent," whispered Luke.

"I am dumb," replied Turpin; "I like a sweet voice, as well as another."

Clear as the song of a bird, yet melancholy as the distant dole of a vesper bell, arose the sound of that sweet voice from the wood. A fragment of a Spanish Gipsy song it warbled: Luke knew it well. Thus ran the romance:—

LA GITANILLA.

By the Guadalquivir,
Ere the sun be flown,
By that glorious river
Sits a maid alone.
Like the sun-set splendour
Of that current bright,
Shone her dark eyes, tender
As its witching light;
Like the ripple flowing,
Tinged with purple sheen,
Darkly, richly, glowing,
Is her warm cheek seen.
'Tis the Gitanilla,
By the stream doth linger,
In the hope that eve
Will her lover bring her.

See, the sun is sinking!
All grows dim, and dies;
See, the waves are drinking
Glories of the skies.
Day's last lustre playeth
On that current dark;
Yet no speck betrayeth
His long looked-for bark.
'Tis the hour of meeting!
Nay,—the hour is past.
Swift the time is fleeting!
Fleeteth Hope as fast.
Still the Gitanilla
By the stream doth linger,
In the hope that night
Will her lover bring her.

The tender trembling of a guitar was heard in accompaniment of the ravishing melodist.

The song ceased.

"Where is the bird?" asked Turpin.

"Move on in silence, and you shall see," said Luke; and, keeping upon the turf, so that his horse's tread became inaudible, he presently arrived at a spot where, through the boughs, the object of his investigation could plainly be distinguished, though they themselves were concealed from view.

Upon a platform of rock, which rose to the height of the trees, nearly perpendicularly from the river's bed, appeared the figure of the Gipsy Maid. Her footstep rested on the extreme edge of the abrupt cliff, at whose base the water boiled in a deep whirlpool, and the bounding chamois could not have been more lightly poised. One small hand rested upon her guitar, the other pressed her brow. Braided hair, of the jettiest die and sleekest texture, was twined around her brow, in endless twisted folds.

> Rowled it was in many a curious fret,
> Much like a rich and curious coronet,
> Upon whose arches twenty Cupids lay,
> And were as tied, or loath to fly away*.

And so exuberant was this rarest feminine ornament, that, after encompassing her brow, it was passed behind, and hung down in long thick plaits, almost to her feet. Sparkling as the sunbeams which played upon her dark yet radiant features, were the large, black, oriental eyes of the maiden, and shaded with lashes long and silken. Her's was a Moorish countenance, in which the magnificence of the eyes eclipses the face, be it ever so beautiful (an effect which may be observed in many of the paintings of Murillo), and the lovely contour is scarce noticed in the gaze which those large, languid, luminous orbs attract. Such was Sybil. Her features were exquisite, yet you looked only at her eyes—they were the load-stars of her countenance. Her costume was singular, and partook, like herself, of other climes. Like the Andalusian dame, her

* Brown's *Pastorale.*

choice of colour inclined towards black, as the material of most of her dress was of that sombre shade. A boddice of dark broidered velvet restrained her delicate bosom's swell; a rich girdle, from which depended a silver chain, sustaining a short poignard, bound her waist; around her slender throat was twined a costly kerchief; and the rest of her dress was calculated to display her *petite*, yet faultless, figure to the fullest advantage.

The attitude she at present assumed was a pensive one; unconscious that she was the object of regard. Raising her guitar, she essayed to touch the chords; she struck a few notes; she resumed her romance:—

Swift that stream flows on,
Swift the night is wearing,—
Yet she is not gone,
Though with heart despairing.

Her song died away—her hand was needed to brush off the tears, that were gathering in her large, dark eyes. At once her attitude was changed. The hare could not have started

more suddenly from her form. She heard accents, well known, chaunting part of her unfinished melody :—

Dips an oar, plash—hark!—
Gently on the river;
'Tis her lover's bark,
On the Guadalquivir.
Hark! a song she hears!
Every note she snatches;
As the singer nears,
Her own name she catches.
Now the Gitanilla
Stays not by the water—
For the midnight hour
Hath her lover brought her.

It was her lover's voice. She caught the sound at once, and, starting as the roe would arouse herself at the hunter's approach, bounded down the crag, and ere he had finished the *refrain*, was by his side.

Flinging the bridle to Turpin, Luke sprang to her, and caught her in his arms. Disengaging herself from his ardent embrace, Sybil drew back, abashed at the sight of the Highwayman.

"Heed him not," said Luke, "it is a friend."

"He is welcome here then," replied Sybil. "But where have you tarried so long, dear Luke?" continued she, as they walked to a little distance from the Highwayman. "What hath detained you? Wearily, wearily, have passed the hours since you departed.—You bring good news?"

"Good news—my girl; so good that I falter even in the telling of it. You shall know all anon. But see, our friend yonder grows impatient. Are there any stirring? We must bestow a meal upon him, and that forthwith: he is one of those that brook not much delay."

"I came not to spoil a love meeting," said Turpin, who had good-humouredly witnessed the scene; "but, in sober seriousness, if there is a stray capon to be met with in the tents of the Egyptians, I shall be glad to make his acquaintance. Methinks I scent a stew afar off."

"Follow me," said Sybil; "your wants shall be supplied."

"Stay," said Luke; "there is one other of our party, whose coming we must abide."

"He is here," said Sybil, observing the Sexton t a distance. "Who is that old man?"

"My grandsire, Peter Bradley."

"Is that Peter Bradley?" asked Sybil.

"Ay, you may well ask the question," said Turpin, "whether that old dried up otomy, who ought to grin in a glass case for folks to stare at, be kith and kin of such a bang-up cove as your fancy man, Luke. But in faith it is."

"Though he be thy grandsire, Luke," said Sybil, "I like him not. His glance resembles that of the Evil Eye."

And, in fact, the look which Peter fixed upon her was such as the rattle-snake casts upon its victim, and Sybil felt as the poor fluttering bird may feel. She could not remove her eyes from his, though she trembled as she gazed. This species of fascination was one that Peter loved to practise. We have said his eyes were like those of the toad. Age had not dimmed their brilliancy. In his harsh features you

could only read bitter scorn, or withering hate; but in his eyes resided a magnetic influence of attraction or repulsion. Sybil underwent the former feeling in a disagreeable degree. She was drawn to him as by the motion of a whirlpool, and involuntarily clang to Luke.

"It is—it is the Evil Eye, dear Luke."

"Tut, tut, dear Sybil; I tell thee it is my grandsire."

"The girl says rightly, however," rejoined Turpin, "Peter has a damned ugly look about the ogles, and stares enough to put a modest wench out of countenance. Come, come, my old earth-worm, crawl along, we have waited for thee long enough. Is this the first time thou hast seen a pretty lass, eh?"

"It is the first time I have seen one so beautiful," said Peter; "and I crave her pardon, if my freedom hath offended her. I wonder not at thy enchantment, grandson Luke, now I behold the object of it. But there is one piece of counsel I would give to this fair maid. The next time she trusts thee

from her sight, I would advise her to await thee at the hill top, otherwise the chances are shrewdly against thy reaching the ground with neck unbroken."

There was something, notwithstanding the satirical manner in which Peter delivered this speech, calculated to make a more favourable impression upon Sybil than his previous conduct had inspired her with; and, having ascertained from Luke to what his speech referred, she extended her hand to him, yet not without a shudder, as his skinny fingers clasped her own. It was like the hand of Venus in the grasp of a skeleton.

"It is a little hand," said Peter, "and I have some skill myself in palmistry. Shall I peruse its lines?"

"Not now, in the devil's name," said Turpin, stamping impatiently. "We shall have the Ruffin* himself amongst us presently, if Peter Bradley grows gallant."

Leading their horses, the party took their

* Devil.

way through the trees. A few minutes' walking brought them in sight of the encampment, the spot selected for which might be termed the Eden of the valley. A Paradise it seemed. Art and Nature had conspired to render it charming. Nature had encircled a small green plain, smooth as well shorn lawn, kept ever verdant (excepting in such places as the frequent fires of the gipsies had scorched its surface), by the flowing stream that rushed past it, with an amphitheatre of wooded hills, and so disposed the timber that flourished thereupon, that, in the language of the painter, each tree protruding from the crag might be said to "*tell;*" while Art had strewn the velvet carpet with the canvas tent and its patches of varied colouring, the rude fashioned hut, of primitive construction, such as might be erected by a wandering Tartar horde—the kettle slung

"Between two poles, upon a stick transverse:"

with the tethered beasts of burthen, and the mouldering ruins of the Priory of St. Francis, which latter finished the picture with a noble back-ground.

Glimmering through the trees, at the extremity of the plain, might be seen the ivy-mantled walls of this once celebrated pile. Though much had gone to decay, enough remained to show what had been the pristine state of this once majestic edifice; and the long, though broken line of the Saxon arches, that still marked the cloister wall—the piers that yet supported the dormitory—the enormous horse-shoe arch which still spanned the court—and, above all, the great, glorious, marigold or circular window, which had terminated the chapel, and which, though now despoiled of its painted honours, retained, like the skeleton leaf, its fibrous intricacies entire, all eloquently spake of the glories of the past, while they awakened reverence and admiration for the still enduring beauty of the present.

> We do love these ancient ruins;
> We never tread upon them but we set
> Our foot upon some reverend history;
> And, questionless, here in this open court,
> Which now lies naked to the injuries
> Of stormy weather, some may lie interred,

> Loved the church so well, and gave so largely to it,
> They thought it should have canopied their bones
> Till doomsday: but all things have their end;
> Churches and cities, which have diseases like to men,
> Must have like death that we have*.

Towards these ruins Sybil conducted the party.

"Do you dwell therein?" asked Peter, pointing towards the Priory.

"That is my dwelling," said Sybil.

"It is one I should covet," returned the Sexton, "more than a modern mansion?"

"I love those old walls better than any house that was ever fashioned," said Sybil.

As they entered upon the Prior's Close, as it was called, several swarthy figures made their appearance from the tents. Many a greeting was bestowed upon Luke, in the wild jargon of the tribe. At length, an uncouth dwarfish figure, with a shock head of black hair, hopped towards them: he seemed to acknowledge Luke as his master.

* WEBSTER'S *Duchess of Malfy.*

"What ho, Grasshopper," said Luke; "here, take the horses, and hark ye, see that they lack neither dressing, nor provender, or I may make you skip higher than you have ever yet done."

"And hark ye, Grasshopper," said Turpin; "I give you a special charge about this mare. Neither dress her nor feed her till I see both done myself. Just walk her for ten minutes, and if you have a glass of ale in the place, let her sip it."

"Your bidding shall be done," chirped the human insect; and he fluttered away with his charges.

A motley assemblage of tawny-skinned varlets, dark-eyed women and children, whose dusky limbs betrayed their lineage, in strange costume, and of wild deportment, checked the path, pronouncing welcome upon welcome into the ear of Luke as he passed. As it was evident he was not in the mood for converse, Sybil, who appeared to be one who had authority amongst them, with a word dispersed them, and the troop herded back to their respective habitations.

A low door admitted them into what had once been the garden, in which some old moss-encrusted trees were still standing, bearing a look of antiquity almost as venerable as that of the adjoining fabric. Another open door gave them entrance to a spacious chamber, which was formerly the eating room, or refectory of the Holy Brotherhood; and a goodly but gloomy room it had been, though now its slender lanceolated windows were stuffed with hay, to keep out the piercing air. Large holes told where huge oaken rafters had once crossed the roof; and a yawning aperture pointed out the place where a cheering fire had formerly blazed. As regarded this latter spot, the good old custom was not even now totally abrogated. An iron plate, covered with crackling wood, sustained a ponderous black cauldron, the rich steam from which gratefully affected the olfactory organs of the Highwayman.

"That augurs well," said he, rubbing his hands.

"Still hungering after the flesh pots of

Egypt," said the Sexton, with a ghastly smile.

"We will see what that kettle contains," said Luke.

"Handassah, Grace," exclaimed Sybil, calling.

Her summons was answered by two maidens, habited, not unbecomingly, in gipsy gear.

"Bring the best our larder can furnish," said Sybil, "and use dispatch; you have appetites to provide for, sharpened by a long ride in the open air."

"And by a night's fasting," added Luke; "and solitary confinement to boot."

"And a night of business," rejoined Turpin, "and plaguing, perplexing business into the bargain."

"And the night of a funeral too," doled Peter, "and that the funeral of a father. Let us have breakfast speedily, by all means. We have rare appetites."

An old oaken table, it might have been the self-same upon which the holy friars had broken their morning fast, stood in the

middle of the room. The ample board soon groaned beneath the weight of the savoury cauldron; the unctuous contents of which proved to be a couple of dismembered pheasants, an equal proportion of poultry, great gouts of ham, mushrooms, onions, and other piquant condiments, so satisfactory to Dick Turpin, that, upon tasting a mouthful, he absolutely shed tears of delight. The dish was indeed the triumph of gipsy cookery, and its execution worthy of the genius of the immortal Ude, to whom we recommend especially the study of a *Potage à la Bohémienne*, assuring him, that if, like Richard Turpin, he should ever meet with such fare after a night of severely fatiguing business, in his attendance upon his club, he will find no more salutary breakfast than that of which the Highwayman partook. So sedulously did Dick apply himself o his mess, and so complete was his abstraction, that he perceived not that he was left alone; it was only when about to wash down the last drum-stick of the last fowl with a can of excellent ale, that he made this discovery.

"What, all gone—and Peter Bradley, too—what the devil does this mean?" said he. "I must not muddle my brain with any more Pharoah*, though I have feasted like a King of Egypt. That will never do. Caution—Dick—caution. Suppose I shift yon brick out of the wall, and place this precious document beneath it. Pshaw, Luke would never play me false. And now for Bess—bless her black skin—she'll wonder where I've been so long. It's not my way to leave her to shift for herself, though she can do that on a pinch."

Soliloquizing thus, he arose, and walked towards the door.

* Strong drink.

CHAPTER III.

The wiving vine, that round the friendly elm
Twines her soft limbs, and weaves a leafy mantle
For her supporting lover, dares not venture
To mix her humble boughs with the embraces
Of the more lofty cedar.

GLAPTHORNE. ALBERTUS WALLENSTEIN.

BENEATH a mouldering wall, whither they had strayed, to be free from interruption, sat Sybil and her lover, upon a carpet of moss.

With eager curiosity she listened to his tale. He recounted all that had befallen him since his departure. He told her of the awful revelations of the tomb—of the ring that, like a talisman, had conjured up a thousand brilliant prospects in the gloom—of his subsequent perils—of his escapes—of his rencontre with Lady

Rookwood—of his visit to his father's body—and of his meeting with his brother. All this she heard with a cheek now flushed with expectation, now grown pale with apprehension—with palpitating bosom, and with suppressed breath. But, when taking a softer tone, love, affection, happiness, inspired the theme, and he sought to paint the bliss that should be their's in his new estate—when he would throw his fortune into her lap—his titles at her feet, and bid her wear them with him—when, with ennobled hand and unchanged heart, he would fulfil the troth plighted by him, the outcast, the despised—in lieu of tender, grateful acquiescence, the features of Sybil became overcast—the soft smile faded away, and even as spring sunshine is succeeded by the sudden shower, the light that dwelt in her sunny orbs grew dim with tears.

Luke gazed at her in amazement, and with displeasure. He had not expected this reception of his suit; on the contrary, he deemed that the anticipation of aggrandisement, which he held out, would have been rapturously welcomed.

That it was not so, was clear. A painful struggle was evidently taking place in Sybil's bosom. Perplexed and mortified, Luke neither spoke nor stirred. We have said that a new train of feeling was awakened within him — that pride was usurping the sacred seat of love—and that his affection for Sybil had received a severe shock. In all probability, had his proposition been met in the manner he expected by Sybil—had she eagerly acquiesced with his expressed wishes, and unhesitatingly and gratefully complied with his offers, he might then have felt that he had rashly committed himself (for Peter Bradley's stinging words still rankled in his recollection like barbed shafts)—and crippled his free purposes on the threshold of his career. But he had found it otherwise; and when, with hesitation in his heart, though passion upon his lips, he had offered all to her—her hand was withdrawn—her face averted—her eyes filled with tears. "Capricious, inconsistent, heartless, insensible! Shall I yield to her humours? Shall I stoop to her?" were his thoughts. "Stoop to

Sybil!" echoed his conscience; and as he looked at her, he felt that his thoughts had belied his heart.

And what were Sybil's emotions? Was she, in reality, the capricious, inconsistent being, Luke had suddenly imagined her to be? Could she not sympathise with his success? She could—she could. There was no thought of her lover's which she could not divine, with which her own wishes were not identified. Her's was a devotion passing the love of woman; in that it was absolute devotion. Nought was suffered to stand between her and her lover. No other sentiment possessed her. She had no kindred, save Barbara, to claim her duty—her affections. She was not distracted with worldly dreams—with thoughts of pleasures or of vanities. She lived for her lover, and for him alone. Beneath her gentle exterior burnt a flame that was to all others a scorching fire: to her lover, innocent as the tongue of flame that licked the prophet's feet. Adoring him thus, can it for an instant be supposed that she was indifferent to her lover's

advancement—that she gloried not in his rise—or that she was meanly jealous of his success? No one could suspect it; and Luke, although he might give vent to impatience, did not, for more than an instant, indulge the thought. At length she raised her eyes, and in them beamed such mournful tenderness, that whatever stern resolves Luke had formed, they disappeared at once before it.

"Why—why is this, dear Sybil?" cried he. "To what am I to attribute these tears? You do not, sure, regret my good fortune?"

"Not on your own account, dear Luke," returned she, sadly; "the tears I shed were for myself.—The first, the only tears that I have ever shed for such cause, and," added she, raising her head like a flower surcharged with moisture, "they shall be the last."

"This is inexplicable, dear Sybil. Why should you lament for yourself—if not for me? Doth not the sunshine of prosperity, that now shines upon me, gild you with the same beam? Did I not, even now, affirm, that the day that

saw me enter my Father's halls, should dawn upon our espousals?"

"True, but the sun that shines upon you, to me wears a threatening aspect—the day of those espousals will never dawn. You cannot make me the Lady of Rookwood."

"What do I hear?" exclaimed Luke, astonished at this avowal of his mistress, sadly and deliberately delivered, which smote upon his ear like a knell. "You cannot mean what you aver; some witchcraft hath been practised—I am possessed by it myself. Hath Peter Bradley—hath that fiend poisoned thy ears likewise? Hath he wrought upon thee, as he fain would have wrought upon me? But I resisted the tempter—I trampled him beneath me; I shook him off, as thou must cast him from thee. Not wed me!—And wherefore not? Is it the rank that I have acquired, or hope to acquire, that displeaseth thee? Declare it, if it be so, that I may at once abandon all further quest of fortune's favours, which would be dearly paid for, if purchased with loss of thee. Speak, that I may waste no further

time in thus pursuing the shadows of happiness, while the reality fleets from me."

"And *are* they shadows—and *is* this the reality, dear Luke? It may be that thou sayest truly; but wilt thou continue to think so? Nay, dost thou think so now? Question thy secret soul, and thou wilt find it otherwise. Thou couldst not forego thy triumph; it is not likely; thou hast dwelt too much upon the proud title which will be thine, to yield it to another, when it may be won so easily. And above all, when thy mother's reputation, and thy own stained name, may be cleared by one word, breathed aloud, wouldst thou fail to utter it? No, dear Luke, I read thy heart—thou wouldst not."

"And if I could *not* forego this, wherefore is it that thou refusest to be a sharer in my triumph? Why wilt thou render my honours valueless, when I have acquired them? Thou lovest me not."

"Not love thee, Luke?"

"Approve it, then."

"I do approve it. Bear witness the sacrifice I am about to make of all my hopes, at the shrine of my idolatry to thee. Bear witness, the agony of this hour. Bear witness, the horror of the avowal, that I never can be your's. As Luke Bradley I would, joyfully—oh, how joyfully, have been your bride. As Sir Luke Rookwood"— and she shuddered, as she pronounced the name, "I never can be so."

"Then, by heaven! Luke Bradley will I remain. But wherefore—wherefore not as Sir Luke Rookwood?"

"Because," replied Sybil, with reluctance, "because I am no longer thy equal. The gipsy's low-born daughter is no mate for Sir Luke Rookwood. Love cannot blind me, dear Luke. It cannot make me other than I am—it cannot exalt me in mine own esteem, nor in that of the world, with which, thou, alas! too soon wilt mingle, and which will regard even me as—no matter what—it shall not scorn me as thy bride. I will not bring shame and reproach on thee. Oh if, for me, dear Luke, the proud ones

of the earth were to treat thee with contumely, this heart would break with agony. For myself, I have pride sufficient—perchance too much; perchance 'tis pride that actuates me now. I know not. But for thee, I am all weakness. As thou wert heretofore, I would have been to thee the tenderest and truest wife that ever breathed; as thou art now——"

"Hear me, Sybil."

"Hear *me* out, dear Luke. One other motive there is, that determines my present conduct, which, were all else surmounted, would in itself suffice. Ask me not what that is: I cannot explain it. For your own sake, I implore you, be satisfied with my refusal."

"What a destiny is mine!" exclaimed Luke, striking his forehead with his clenched hand. "No choice is left me. Either way I destroy my own happiness. On the one hand standeth Love —on the other, Fame; yet neither will conjoin."

"Pursue then fame," said Sybil, energetically, "if thou *canst* hesitate. Forget that I have ever existed — forget thou hast ever loved—

forget that such a passion dwells within the human heart, and thou mayst still be happy, though thou art great."

"And do you deem," replied Luke, with frantic impatience, "that I *can* accomplish this —that I *can* forget that I have loved you—that I *can* forget you? Cost what it will, the effort shall be made. Yet by our former love, I charge thee tell me what hath wrought this change in thee? Why dost thou *now* refuse me?"

"I have said you are Sir Luke Rookwood," returned Sybil, with painful emotion. "Doth that name import nothing?"

"Imports it aught of ill?"

"To me, every thing of ill. It is a fated house. Its line are all predestined."

"To what?" demanded Luke.

"To *murder!*" replied Sybil, with solemn emphasis. "To the murder of their wives. Forgive me, Luke, if I have dared to utter this. Yourself compelled me to it."

Amazement, horror, wrath, kept Luke silent for a few moments. Starting to his feet, he cried—

"And can you suspect me of a crime so foul? Think you, because I shall assume the name, that I shall put on the nature likewise of the race? Do you believe that I am capable of aught so horrible?"

"Oh no—No, I believe it not. I am sure you would not do it. Your soul would reject, with horror, such a deed; but if Fate should guide your hand—if the avenging spirit of your murdered ancestress should point the steel, you could not shun it then."

"My murdered ancestress! to what do you allude?"

"To a tradition of your house. 'Tis said, that the first of the race from which you now claim descent, Sir Ranulph Rookwood, slew his dame, in jealous indignation for imaginary wrong. Her prayers, her tears, her adjurations of innocence—and she *was* innocent—all her agony, could not move him. He stabbed her thrice. He smote the bleeding corse, and as life was ebbing fast away, with her fleeting breath she pronounced a curse upon her murderer, and upon his race. She had invoked all powers

of mercy, and of goodness, to aid her. A deaf ear had been turned unto her agonized entreaties. With her dying lips she summoned those of hell. She surrendered her soul to the dark Spirit of Evil, for revenge; and revenge was accorded her. She died—but her curse survived. That fatal malediction attached to her Lord, and to all his line. No penance could expiate the offence—no tears wash out the bloody stain—all have been hurried into the commission of the same crime. Yet as it hath been a fate, a ministration of the Spirit of Evil, none have suffered the punishment of their guilt. Where their affection hath been fixed, hath their dagger struck. Was it not so with thy father—with Sir Reginald—Sir Ralph—Sir Ranulph? And when I tell thee this, dear Luke—when I find thee bear the name of this accursed race, canst thou wonder, if I shudder at adding to the dismal list of the victims of that ruthless spirit: and that I tremble for thee? I would die for thee, willingly—but not by thy hand. I would not that my blood, which I

would now pour out for thee as freely as water, should rise up in judgment against thee. For myself I have no fears—for thee, a thousand. My mother, upon her death-bed, told me I should never be thine. I believed her not, for I was happy then. She said that we never should be united; or, if united——"

"What, in heaven's name?"

"That thou wouldst be my destroyer; that thy love should turn to hatred—and thou wouldst slay me. How could I credit her words then? How can I doubt them now, when I find thou art a Rookwood? And think not, dear Luke, that I am ruled by selfish fears in this resolve. To renounce thee may cost me my life; but the deed will be my own. Thou mayst call me superstitious, credulous: I have been nurtured in credulity. It is the faith of my fathers. There are those, methinks, who have an insight into futurity; and such boding words have been spoken, that, be they true or false, I will not risk their fulfilment in my person. I may be credulous—I may be weak—I may be erring—but I

am steadfast in this. Bid me perish at your feet, and I will do it. But I will not be your Fate. I will not be the wretched instrument of your perdition. I will love, I will worship—I will watch, serve—perish for you—but I will not wed you."

Exhausted with the vehemence of her emotion, she would have sunk upon the ground, had not Luke caught her in his arms. Pressing her to his bosom, he renewed his passionate protestations. Every argument was unavailing—Sybil appeared inflexible.

"You love me as you have ever loved me?" said she, at length.

"A thousand fold more fervently," replied Luke. "Put it to the test."

"How? If I dared to do so. Consider well—I may ask too much."

"Name it. If it be not to surrender thee, by my mother's body I will obey thee."

"I would propose an oath."

"An oath?"

"A solemn binding oath, that, if thou wed-

dest me not, thou wilt not wed another. Ha! dost thou start? Have I appalled thee?"

"I start? I will take it. Hear me—by——"

"Hold!" exclaimed a voice behind them—"do not forswear thyself;" and immediately afterwards the Sexton made his appearance. There was a malignant scowl upon his countenance. The lovers started at the ominous interruption.

"Begone," cried Luke.

"Take not that oath," said Peter, "and I leave you. Remember the counsel which I gave you on our way hither."

"What counsel did he give thee, Luke?" inquired Sybil, eagerly of her lover.

"We spoke of thee, fond girl," replied Peter. "I cautioned him against the match. I knew not thy sentiments, or I had spared myself the trouble. Thou hast judged wisely. Were he to wed thee, ill must come of it: but he *must* wed another."

"Must!" cried Sybil, her eyes absolutely emitting sparkles of indignation from their

night-like depths; and, unsheathing, as she spoke, the short poignard which she wore at her girdle, she rushed towards Peter, raising her hand to strike. "*Must* wed another! and darest thou counsel this?"

"Put up thy dagger, fair maiden," said Peter, calmly. "Had I been younger, thine eyes might have had more terrors for me than thy weapon; as it is, I am proof against both. Thou wouldst not strike an old man like myself, and of thy lover's kin?"

Sybil's uplifted hand fell to her side.

"'Tis true," continued the Sexton, "I dared to give him this advice; and when thou hast heard me out, thou wilt not, I am persuaded, think me so unreasonable as, at first, I may appear to be. I have been an unseen listener to your converse —not that I desire to pry into your secrets— far from it; but I overheard you by accident. I applaud your resolution: but if you are inclined to sacrifice all for your lover's weal, do not let the work be incomplete. Bind him not by oaths, which he will regard as spider's webs,

to be burst through at pleasure. Thou seest, as well as I, that he is bent on being Lord of Rookwood; and, in truth, to an aspiring youth, such a desire is natural—is praiseworthy. It will be pleasant, as well as honourable, to efface the stain that has been cast upon his birth. It will be an act of filial duty in him, to restore his mother's good name; and I, her father, laud his anxiety on that score; though, to speak truth, fair maid, I am not so rigid as your nice moralists in my view of human nature, and can allow a latitude to love, which their nicer scruples will not admit. It will be a proud thing to triumph over his implacable foe; and this he may accomplish——"

"Without marriage," interrupted Sybil, angrily.

"True," returned Peter—"yet not maintain it. May win it, but not wear it. Thou hast said truly, the house of Rookwood is a fated house; and it hath been said, likewise, that if he wed not one of his own kindred—that if Rook mate not with Rook, his possessions shall pass away from

his hands, as thou shalt hear." And Peter repeated the prophetic quatrain, with which the reader is already acquainted. "Thou hearest what this quaint rhyme saith. Luke is, doubtless, the stray Rook, and there is a fledgling, that I wot not of, flown hither from a distant country. He must take her to his mate, or relinquish her and the 'ancient nest' to his brother. For my own part, I disregard such sayings. I have little faith in prophecy and divination. I see not why it should be so. I know not what Eleanor Mowbray, for so she is called, can have to do with the tenure of the estates of Rookwood. It may be so, or it may not be so. But if Luke Rookwood, after he hath lorded it for awhile in splendour, be cast forth again in his rags and wretchedness, let him not blame his grandsire for his own want of caution."

"Luke, I implore thee, tell me," said Sybil, who had listened, horror-stricken, to the Sexton, shuddering, as it were, beneath the chilly influence of his malevolent look—"is this true?

Doth thy fate depend upon Eleanor Mowbray? Who is she? What hath she to do with Rookwood? Hast thou seen her? Dost thou love her?"

"I have never seen her," replied Luke.

"Thank God for that," cried Sybil. "Then thou lovest her not."

"How were that possible?" returned Luke. "Do I not say I have not seen her?"

"Who is she, then?"

"This old man tells me she is my cousin. She is betrothed to my brother, Ranulph."

"How?" ejaculated Sybil. "To thy brother, Ranulph! And wouldst thou snatch his betrothed from his arms? Wouldst thou break her heart, as, if she love him, thou must do? Wouldst thou do him this grievous wrong? Bethink thee, dear Luke. Is it not enough that thou must wrest from him that which he hath long deemed his own? And if he hath falsely deemed it so, it will not make his loss the less bitter. In what thou doest now thou art justified. Thou hast a right to what is thine

own—the estates of Rookwood are thine own—but she is *not* thine own. But why do I thus affright myself? If she love thy brother, Eleanor Mowbray will die, sooner than give to thee the hand which she pledged to *him*. I know not how those who have been more gently nurtured than myself feel, but I had rather been torn in piece-meal by wild horses—had rather fling myself into the roaring torrent, that dashes from yon rock, than forfeit so my fealty. If thou thus wrong'st thy brother, do not look for happiness—do not look for respect, for neither will be thy portion. Even this stony-hearted old man shrinks aghast at such a deed—his snakelike eyes are buried on the ground. See, I have moved even *him*."

And in truth Peter did appear, for an instant, strangely moved.

"'Tis nothing," returned he, mastering his emotion by strong effort. "What is all this to me? I never had a brother—I never had aught—wife, child, or relative, that loved

me. And I love not the world, nor the things of the world, nor those that inhabit the world—but I know what sways the world, and its inhabitants, and that is—SELF—AND SELF-INTEREST! Let Luke reflect on this. The key to Rookwood is Eleanor Mowbray. The hand that grasps her's, grasps those lands—thus saith the prophecy."

"It is a lying prophecy."

"It was uttered by one of thy race."

"By whom?"

"By Barbara Lovel," said Peter, with a sneer of triumph.

"Ha!"

"Heed him not," exclaimed Luke, as Sybil recoiled at this intelligence. "I am thine."

"Not mine—not mine," shrieked she; "but oh, not *her's*."

"Whither goest thou?" cried Luke, as Sybil, half bewildered, tore herself from him.

"To Barbara Lovel."

"I will go with thee."

"No; let me go alone—I have much to ask her; yet tarry not with this old man, dear Luke—or close thine ears, like the deaf adder, to his crafty talk. Avoid him. Oh, I am sick at heart. Follow me not—I implore thee, follow me not."

And with distracted air she darted amongst the mouldering cloisters, leaving Luke stupefied with anguish and surprise. The Sexton maintained a stern and stoical composure.

"She is but woman, after all," muttered he; "all her high flown resolves melt like snow in the sunshine, at the thought of a rival. I congratulate thee, grandson Luke—thou art free from thy fetters."

"Free!" echoed Luke. "Quit my sight—I loathe to look upon thee. Thou hast broken the truest heart that ever beat in woman's bosom."

"Tut, tut," returned Peter; "it is not broken yet. Wait till we hear what old Barbara has got to say; and, meanwhile, we must arrange with Dick Turpin the price of that certificate.

The knave knows its value well. Come, be a man. This is worse than womanish."

And, at length, he succeeded, half by force and half by persuasion, in dragging Luke away with him.

CHAPTER IV.

Los Gitanos son encantadores, adivinos, magos, chyromanticos, que dicen por las rayas de las manos lo Futuro, que ellos llaman Buenaventura, y generalmente son dados à toda supersticion.

DOCTOR SANCHO DE MONCADA.
Discurso sobre Espulsion de los Gitanos.

LIKE a dove, escaped from the talons of the falcon, Sybil fled from the clutches of the Sexton. Her brain was in a whirl, her blood on fire; she had no distinct perception of external objects—no definite notion of what she, herself, was about to do, and glided more like a flitting spirit than a living woman, along the ruined ambulatory. Her hair had fallen in disorder over her face—she stayed not to adjust it, but tossed aside the blinding locks with frantic impatience. She felt as one may feel

who tries to strain his nerves, shattered by illness, to the endurance of some dreadful, yet necessary pain.

Racked by a thousand fears, lest she should accelerate her fate, and involve her lover in more peril, Sybil wished to make one final effort to re-establish or utterly overthrow her own peace of mind. What she hoped to gain by the interview she was about to seek with her aged relative, she scarce knew. Her main object was to confirm to herself (for drowning love will cling to straws) the truth of Luke's assertions; not that she doubted his veracity, but she still trusted that he might be in error, even as to the extent of his claims to the title and to the estates of Rookwood. This, at once she could ascertain, by appealing to Barbara, who had seen the body of his mother—who had embalmed it—who must have perceived the ring (that startling evidence of the marriage of the departed), had there been ring upon the finger—whose skill in simples, in medical craft, and knowledge of the human frame, would at once have told her if

the dead had come to her end fairly; and who could at once verify the Sexton's statement respecting the prophecy. This she could learn at once. Were there a doubt, or a shadow of a doubt, she might yet be happy. But what if Barbara confirmed it all? If she *had* seen the ring? She dared not think on that.

Sybil loved her relative, old Barbara; but it was with a love tempered by fear. Barbara was not a person to inspire esteem, or to claim affection. She was regarded, by the wild tribe, which she ruled, as their Queen elect, with some such feeling of inexplicable awe as is entertained by the African slave for the Obeah Woman. They acknowledged her power, unhesitatingly obeyed her commands, and shrank with terror from her anathema, which was indeed seldom pronounced; but when uttered, was considered as doom. Her tribe she looked upon as her flock, and stretched her maternal hand over all, ready alike to cherish or chastise; and having already survived a generation, that which succeeded,—having from infancy imbibed a super-

stitious veneration for the "cunning woman," as she was called, the sentiment could never be wholly eradicated; but continued in such force in after-life, as to make the fiercest of that fierce race implicitly to comply with her mandates, and bow in submission to her edicts.

One circumstance, indeed, might have some controul over the band. From whatever source derived, she had obtained a hoard of gold, and this she distributed freely. She could reward as well as punish, and was withal, wise enough to maintain good order, and promote concord. By means of her strangely acquired wealth, she had, it was said, frequently diverted the course of justice, and effected the liberation of several of the wildest of her gang from gaol; or, at least, had afforded them comforts during their confinement. These favours were never forgotten, and Barbara had acquired an absolute ascendancy over every individual composing her formidable tribe—an ascendancy which increased as she advanced in years (for store of years is supposed, by this savage people, to bring with

it store of wisdom), so that at the period of our tale, when she had already numbered more than eighty winters, the will of Barbara, once expressed, was law. Add to all this, the knowledge which she possessed of the power and virtue of all healing plants and roots; the skill which she displayed in their application; the frequent cures she had performed; the strange instruments, the drugs, the oils, the distilments, the spicy woods, which she possessed, and the mystery she observed in the art she practised (for Barbara knew full well the advantage of concealment); these, and a hundred other reasons, made her appear to her people as the High Priestess of their mystic rites, endowed, from some dark source, with magic power. Some, indeed, entertained the belief, that she had obtained her power, her gold, and her length of life, by the barter of her soul to the evil one; but, as the prevailing opinion amongst the gipsy people happened to be, that man has no soul to dispose of, this hypothesis was treated with the contempt

it deserved, by the majority. All, however, concurred in thinking her a remarkable woman; and in whatever speculation they might privately indulge, none dared openly to disobey her.

Sybil partook, in a measure, of these sentiments. How could it be otherwise? She was born in another land—under a warmer sun—amongst a more fiery people; yet amongst a people who followed the same pursuits, modified by the customs of the land in which they dwelt, and directed towards the same end. Her youth, her maturer years, if her years could even as yet be called mature, had been spent under the surveillance of Barbara. Her father—a contrabandist—a mountain smuggler—had perished by the carbines of the soldiery. His widow was taken—imprisoned—tortured—condemned as an heretic, to perish at the Auto-da-Fé.

Here it was that Barbara's power was shown to its utmost extent. By that wonderful freemasonry which exists amongst this singular race, and enables them to communicate with each other in different places, and in different

countries, Barbara, with a celerity almost inconceivable, had received intelligence of her daughter's imprisonment. She set out. Crossing France—she scaled the Pyrennees—she traversed Spain—she passed through Madrid —she arrived at Toledo, in which town her unfortunate child was confined. There she lost all trace of her: her agents could supply her with no further information. She was not in the public prison; and, trembling with horror, anxiety, and apprehension, the mother was obliged to await the day of execution for a glimpse of her child, and to postpone the execution of her plans until that period, and so double the danger and hazard of a rescue, if she dared to attempt a rescue at all. But what will not a mother attempt, and a mother to whom fear is unknown?

Meantime, the wretched prisoner knew not of all this. She had experienced all the tortures of the Question. The rack could extort nothing from her. There was nothing to be extorted. She was no magician;—she was no idolatress;—

but she was a Gitana—"*Ateista sin religion alguna*," as the learned Doctor Moncada, who wrote upon the expulsion of this race from Spain, hath it—and worse than the "*Arrianos, Moros, Judios y ohos henemigos de la Iglesia. No usan de des dispensaciones, ni sacramentos algunos, imagenes, rosarios, bulas, ni oyen misa, ni oficios divinos, jamas entran las Iglesias*—*" and this was sufficient, without proof of sorcery—and, to her misfortune, she was a mother. Sybil, her child, an infant then, was the companion of her prison. Amidst all this horror, the child was unaffrighted, till she saw her mother, pale, lacerated, bleeding, fresh from the teeth of the rack, brought back to the dungeon. The mother murmured not; she tried to smile; but the child recoiled from her bleeding touch. A refinement of cruelty suggested itself to the minds of these human leeches—*the child should witness her mother's torture:* it should stand beside her. Reversing

* Discurso.

the Levitical Law, they purposed to "seethe the kid in the milk of its mother." The idea was too horrible. So soon as she understood their meaning, she confessed a falsehood—she proclaimed her heresies—she condemned herself to the stake.

Attired in all the tragical masquerade of that impious festival, bare-footed, with the candle in her hand, clad in the garments of the Holy Office, crowned with the flame-coloured cap, leading her child by the hand, walked the wretched woman, in expectation of her fate; the bells rang, the people shouted, the light-hearted laughed, the bigots exulted. Some admired her dark eyes and her small feet, for she was a beautiful woman; some pitied the forlorn little child, whose bewildered gaze was turned half in fear, half in admiration, upon the assembled multitude; some few wept at the mother's anguish; but more rejoiced at the death of the heretic and the heathen. All at once, there was a rush made amongst the crowd. A number of masked inquisitors, for such they

seemed, enveloped in long sable cloaks, accompanied by their familiars, by the Alguacils, the Corregidor masked likewise, and by several cowled priests, started forward. Without a word, without a blow, they seized upon the victim, and upon her child — they bore them off; and, before an attempt could be made at rescue, had disappeared. This bold deed had been so suddenly executed, and by such a formidable cavalcade, that no one had dared to interfere; and though all the city was searched, every house ransacked, every gate closed, every suspicious person examined, every pass scrupulously noted, no trace of the lost victim, of her child, or of the perpetrators, was discovered. The Holy Brotherhood was panic-stricken. The Ladrones, Rufianes, the Cingáros, and the whole horde of vagabonds who infested a certain portion of the city *, were suspected, but it could never be brought home to them; and in due season the affair was hushed up, or forgotten.

* En la Ciudad de Toledo
Donde flor de Bayles son.

Romance de Germania.

Barbara escaped, and furthermore succeeded in bringing her daughter and her grandchild to England. Sybil's mother did not long survive. She had suffered too much by the rack, the thumbscrew, and other horrible treatment in the abominable dungeon in which she had been thrust; but she died not at the stake, and that was enough. She had been her mother's youngest child—the child of her old age—the only daughter—and as such, the beloved—the favourite. Barbara nursed her—tended her; but she could not restore the suppleness of the broken joints—she could not heal those gasping lungs, burst by the weight imposed upon her breast. She died, and bequeathed *her* daughter to her mother's care, and Sybil had been to her as a child, yet not as her own child.

This achievement was a subject of unmingled triumph to Barbara. She often boasted of it, and with reason. To have torn his prey from the jaws of the tiger in his own lair, were an easy task, compared with the wresting of a victim from the fangs of the Inquisition;

yet she had accomplished it, with the assistance of the Gitanos, who were disguised in the manner described; but not, as she shrewdly remarked in describing the event, without an awful waste of gold, which she poured out like water. "But," added Barbara, "you all know that when I want gold I need only to dig for it. This staff," showing her bifurcate hazel rod, without which she never stirred, "will always show me where it lies."

While on the subject of the Divining Rod, we may mention that, addicted to the practice of divination, Barbara did not, as is the case with most of her tribe, confine herself to the pursuit of a single branch of that abstruse science, as chiromancy, but followed it through its remotest branches, seeking to obtain knowledge of good and ill, and to foresee the future fate and fortune of those who consulted her, like the augurs of old, by what Gaule, in his Mag-astro-mancer, describes as "Antinopomancy, by the entrails of men, women, and children; Theriomancy, by beasts; Ornithomancy, by birds; Ickthyo-

mancy, by fishes; Hydromancy, by water; Botanomancy, by herbs; Cleromancy, by lots; Catoxtromancy, by looking-glasses." Though we cannot avouch that she extended her inspections so far in her Typomancy, or the coagulation of cheese, or to that farthest flight of art, "Cephaleonomancy, or consultation by the brayling of an ass's head." There were few things, however, for which she did not draw conclusions, and her whole soul seemed absorbed in pondering upon past events, and muttering prophetic speculations for the future.

To return. Winding her way, she knew not how, through roofless halls, over disjointed fragments of fallen pillars, Sybil reached a flight of steps. A door, studded with iron nails, stayed her progress; it was an old strong oaken door, surmounted by a gothic arch, in the key-stone of which was one of those grotesque demoniacal faces with which the Fathers of the Church delighted to adorn their shrines. Sybil looked up—her glance encountered the leering gaze of the fantastical visage. It recalled the features of the Sex-

ton, and seemed to mock her—to revile her. Her fortitude at once deserted her—her fingers were upon the handle of the door. She hesitated: she even drew back, with the intention of departing, for she felt then that she dared not face Barbara. It was too late—she had moved the handle. A deep voice from within, called to her by her name. She dared not disobey that call: she entered.

The room in which Sybil found herself was the only entire apartment now existing in the Priory. It had survived the ravages of time, it had escaped the devastation of man, whose ravages outstrip those of time. Octagonal, lofty, yet narrow, you saw at once that it formed the interior of a turret. It was lighted by a small oriel window, commanding a lovely view of the scenery around, and panelled with oak, richly wrought in ribs and groins; and from overhead depended a moulded ceiling of honeycomb plaster-work. This room had something, even now, in the days of its desecration, of monastic beauty about it. Where the odour of

sanctity had breathed forth, the fumes of idolatry prevailed; but imagination, ever on the wing, flew back to that period (and a tradition to that effect warranted the supposition), when, perchance, it had been the sanctuary and the privacy of the Prior's self.

Wrapped in a cloak, composed of the skins of various animals, upon a low pallet, covered with stained scarlet cloth, sat Barbara. Around her head was coiffed, in folds, like those of an Asiatic turban, a rich, though faded shawl, and her waist was encircled with the magic Zodiacal Zone—proper to the sorceress—the *Mago Cineo* of the Cingara (whence the name, according to Moncada), which Barbara had brought from Spain. From her ears depended long golden drops, of curious antique fashioning; and upon her withered fingers, which were like a coil of lizards, were hooped a multitude of silver rings, of the purest, but simplest, manufacture. They seemed almost of massive unwrought metal. Her skin was yellow as the body of a toad; corrugated as its back. She

might have been steeped in saffron from her finger tips, the nails of which were of the same hue, to such portions of her neck as were visible, and which was puckered up like the throat of a tortoise. To look at her, one might have thought the embalmer had experimented her art upon herself. So dead—so bloodless—so blackened, seemed the flesh, where flesh remained, leather could scarce be tougher than her skin. She seemed like an animated mummy. Such a frame, so prepared, appeared calculated to endure for ages; and, perhaps, might have done so; but, alas! the soul cannot be embalmed; no oil can reillume that precious lamp; and that Barbara's vital spark was fast waning, was evident, from her heavy, bloodshot eyes, once of a swimming black, and lengthy as a witch's, which were now sinister, and sunken.

The atmosphere of the room was as strongly impregnated as a museum, with volatile odours, emitted from the stores of drugs with which the shelves were loaded, as well as from various stuffed specimens of birds and wild animals. Barbara's

only living companion was a monstrous owl, which, perched over the old gipsy's head, hissed a token of recognition, as Sybil advanced. From a hook, which had been placed in the plaster roof, was suspended a globe of crystal glass, about the size and shape of a large gourd, filled with a pure pellucid liquid, in which a small snake, the Egyptian aspic, described perpetual gyrations.

Dim were the eyes of Barbara, yet not altogether sightless. The troubled demeanour of her grandchild struck her as she entered. She felt the hot drops upon her hand as Sybil stooped to kiss it: she heard her vainly stifled sobs.

"What ails thee, child?" said Barbara, in a voice that rattled in her throat, and hollow as the articulation of a phantom. "Hast thou heard tidings of Luke Bradley? Hath any ill befallen him? I told thee thou wouldst either hear of him or see him this morning. He is not returned, I see. What hast thou heard."

"He *is* returned," replied Sybil, faintly; "and no ill hath happened to him?"

"He *is* returned, and thou here," echoed Barbara. "No ill hath happened to *him* thou sayest—am I to understand there is ill to *thee?*"

Sybil answered not. She could not answer.

"I see, I see," said Barbara, more gently, her head and hand shaking with paralytic affection—"a quarrel, a lover's quarrel. Old as I am, I have not forgotten my feelings as a girl. What woman ever does, if she be woman? and thou, like thy poor mother, art a true hearted wench. She loved her husband, as a husband should be loved, Sybil; and though she loved me well, she loved him better, as was right. Ah! it was a bitter day when she left me and her own land; for though, to one of our wandering race, all countries are alike, yet the soil of our birth is dear to us, and the presence of our kindred dearer. Well, well, I will not think of that. She is gone. Nay, take it not so to heart, wench. Luke hath a hasty temper. 'Tis not the first time I have told thee so. He will not bear rebuke, and thou hast questioned him too shrewdly, touching his absence. Is it not so?

Heed it not. Trust me thou wilt have him seek thy forgiveness ere the shadows shorten 'neath the noontide sun."

"Alas! alas!" said Sybil, sadly, "this is no lover's quarrel, which may, at once, be forgotten and forgiven—would it were so."

"What is it then?" asked Barbara; and without waiting Sybil's answer, she continued, with vehemence—"Hath he wronged thee? Tell me, girl, in what way? Speak, that I may avenge thee, if it be that thy wrong requires revenge. Art thou blood of mine, and thinkest I will not do this for thee, girl! None of the blood of Barbara Lovel was ever unrevenged. I will catch him, though he run—I will trip him, though he leap—I will reach him, though he flee afar—I will drag him hither by the hair of his head," added she, with a livid smile, and clenching her hands, as in the act of dragging some one towards her. "He shall wed thee within the hour, if thou wilt have it; or, if thy honour need that it should be so. My power is not departed from me. My people are yet at

my command. I am still their Queen, and woe to him that offendeth me or thee."

"Mother! Mother!" cried Sybil, affrighted at the storm she had unwittingly aroused; "he hath not injured me. 'Tis I alone who am to blame, not Luke; he cannot help it."

"Help what!" asked Barbara; "you speak in mysteries."

"Sir Piers Rookwood is dead."

"Dead!" echoed Barbara, trembling with surprise. "Sir Piers dead——"

"And Luke Bradley——"

"Ha!"

"Is his successor——"

"Who told thee that?" asked Barbara, with increased astonishment.

"Luke himself. I know all—all is disclosed." And Sybil hastily recounted Luke's adventures. "He is now Sir Luke Rookwood."

"This is news, in truth, said Barbara; yet not news to weep for. Thou shouldst rejoice for, not lament it. Well, well; I saw it—I knew it. I shall live to see all accomplished—

to see my Agatha's child ennobled—to see her wedded; ay, to see her well wedded."

"Dearest mother!"

"I can endow thee, and I will do it. Thou shalt bring to thy husband not alone thy beauty—thou shalt bring him wealth."

"But, mother——"

"My Agatha's daughter shall be Lady Rookwood."

"Never! It cannot be."

"What cannot be?"

"The match you now propose."

"Not be. What mean you, silly wench? Not be—it must—it shall—why should it not be? Ha, ha! I perceive the meaning of those tears—the truth flashes upon me—he hath discarded thee."

"No, by the heaven of heavens, he is still the same—unaltered in affection."

"If so, thy tears are out of place—thy sorrow out of season."

"Not so."

"I tell thee yea—ha!—that look—thou

wouldst not give me to understand that it is thou who art the jilt?"

"Mother, it is not fitting that I, a gipsy born, should wed with him."

"Not fitting! ha! and thou my child—not fitting! Get up, or I will spurn thee—not fitting! Dry thine eyes, or I will stab thee—not fitting! This from thee to me! I tell thee it is fitting—thou shalt have a dower as ample as that of any lady in the land—not fitting! Is it so thou sayest, because thou thinkest that he derives himself from a proud and ancient line—ancient and proud—ha! ha! I tell thee, girl, that for his one ancestor I can number twenty—for the years in which his lineage hath flourished my race can boast centuries, and was a people—a kingdom, ere the land in which he dwells was known. What! if by the curse of Heaven we were driven forth, the curse of Hell rests upon his house."

"I know it," said Sybil; "a dreadful curse, which, if I wed him, will alight on me."

"No; not on thee—thou shalt avoid that curse!"

"Avoid it?"

"I know a means to satisfy the avenger. Leave that to me."

"I dare not, as it never can be; yet tell me—you saw the body of Luke's ill-fated mother—was she poisoned? Nay, you may speak; Sir Piers's death releases you from your oath. How died she?"

"By strangulation," said the old gipsy, raising her palsied hand to her throat.

"Oh," cried Sybil, gasping with horror. "Was there a ring upon her finger?"

"A ring—a wedding ring. The finger was crookened."

"Then there is no doubt that she was wedded, and that he is Sir Luke Rookwood?"

"Doubt! I would have told Luke all, long, long ago, had not my oath sealed fast my lips. Listen to me, girl. When I was left alone, to do mine office with the corpse of Susan, I saw

indubitable proofs upon the body, of her fatal end. She was smothered sleeping, and the ring upon her finger told me, by her husband. I thought that none but those accursed Spanish butchers, who call themselves holy, that maimed my darling, my Agatha, could have hearts savage enough to perpetrate a deed so horrible; for she looked so beautiful, so innocent, so smiling, even in death, that, little used to weeping, as I was, mine eyes would scarce permit me to complete mine office. She was not unlike thy mother, girl, except that her complexion was more delicate, and lacked thy mother's rich and sunburnt warmth. Well, I came forth—her murderer stood before me—Sir Piers. He trembled in each joint, as I looked at him;—he saw that I knew his guilt—he saw that he was in my power. Peter Bradley was with him likewise. The Sexton watched my looks—he seemed to read the secret in my countenance, and, as he looked from the one to the other, he smiled. I shall never forget that smile—it was a father's

smile upon his daughter's murderer, carrying a consciousness of the crime along with it. I asked to be alone with Sir Piers; he feared to comply, yet dared not refuse. We *were* alone—thou wonderest how I ventured to trust myself with him. I was armed, and then few men could cope with Barbara. I would have stabbed him, if he had stirred—I *could* have stabbed him for a lighter offence. 'You have seen her,' said he. 'I have,' I answered. He dared not continue the conversation. I spoke boldly, for I hated him. 'You were her assassin,' I said. He started. 'Deny it not,' I continued—'your life is forfeit, if I but speak.'—'But you will not speak? If gold will not purchase your silence, fear shall.'—'I deride your threats,' I returned; 'and if you repeat them, I will denounce you. There is a ring upon her finger.' Again he started. 'She was your wife?'—'Alas!' replied he, 'she was.'—'What demon prompted you to kill her?' I added. 'Pride, pride,' shrieked he; 'and the curse that is attached to our house, the

insatiate spirit, which will have its victim. She is gone—she is gone—would I were also dead. Denounce me—give me up to justice—I deserve it all.' His remorseful agony, in a measure, overcame my anger, and, looking steadily upon his face, I saw that he was under the influence of Fate. I even pitied him, such was the extremity of affliction to which he was reduced. After a while, he partially recovered: he brought out gold—a hoard of gold—'it was mine,' he said; 'I should have more, if I would take the oath not to divulge the dreadful secret in his lifetime.' He renewed his entreaties—I took the oath. He then led me into another chamber, where an infant was sleeping—it was a beautiful boy—it was Luke. 'Take this child,' said he; 'the sight of it will only recall her—its presence is dangerous. Take the child, and with it what gold thou wilt. Appoint what place thou thinkest proper, and more shall be sent thee; but hence, away; the sight of that child maddens—it is like an accusing angel.' I took the child—I took his gold—I

did not remonstrate with him on the barbarous and unnatural act he was committing. The child I thought would thrive as well with me, and it did thrive, as thou knowest, Sybil, under my care. Amongst the bravest, the boldest, and the handsomest of our tribe, ranked Luke Bradley. His was the education of a man. Thinkest thou, Sybil, I have forgotten the day when thou returnedst with thy luckless mother? Thou wert an infant then—a very pretty dark-eyed child, and he a boy some years in advance of thee; yet even then, children as ye were, ye seemed to love each other, and then first the thought flashed across me of your union. I have watched you ever since—I have witnessed the growth, the progress of your affection—I have affianced you. The period of reward is arrived—he is Sir Luke—he is your husband."

"Hold, mother—do not deceive yourself," said Sybil, with a fearful earnestness. "He is not yet Sir Luke Rookwood—would he had no claim to be so. The fortune that hath hitherto

been so propitious, may yet desert him. Bethink you of a prophecy you uttered."

"A prophecy? Ha!——"

And with slow enunciation Sybil pronounced the mystic words which she had heard repeated by the Sexton.

As she spake, a gloom, like that of a thunder-cloud, began to gather over the brow of the old gipsy. The orbs of her sunken eyes expanded, and wrath supplied her frame with vigour. She arose.

"Who told thee that?" cried Barbara.

"Peter Bradley."

"Peter Bradley, the Sexton of Rookwood?" screamed the infuriate woman. "Ha! How learnt he it? It was to one who hath long been in his grave I told it—so long ago, it had passed from my memory. 'Tis strange — Reginald hath a brother, I know; but there is no other of the house."

"There is a cousin—Eleanor Mowbray."

"Eleanor Mowbray! Ha! I see, a daughter

of that Eleanor Rookwood, who fled from her father's roof. Fool, fool; am I caught in my own toils? Those words were words of truth and power, and compel the future and 'the will be,' as with chains of brass. They must be fulfilled, but not by Ranulph. He shall never wed Eleanor."

"Whom then shall she wed?"

"Sir Luke Rookwood."

"Mother!" shrieked Sybil. "Dost thou say so? Oh! recall thy speech."

"I may not; it is spoken. He shall wed her."

"Oh God, support me!" exclaimed Sybil.

"Silly wench, be firm—it must be as I say. He shall wed her; yet shall he wed her not—the altar and the grave are but a step apart—the nuptial torch shall be quenched as soon as lighted—the curse of the avenger shall fall—yet not on thee——"

"Mother, I comprehend you not," cried Sybil—"I would not comprehend you. If sin must fall upon some innocent head, let it be

hurled on mine—not upon her's. I love him—I could gladly die for him. She is young—she is unoffending—perhaps happy. Oh, do not let her perish ——"

"Peace, I say!" cried Barbara.

"There lives another, his brother,—think of that, dear mother!"

"It is in vain."

"Oh, for my sake—for my martyred mother's sake," cried Sybil.

"Touch not that chord, girl," said Barbara; "trifle not with thy mother's name thus lightly. I owe it to her memory to look to thy advancement."

"Advancement!" echoed Sybil, her voice stifled with sobs. "It will advance me to my grave. Oh, mother, lend not thine hand to sin."

"To sin!" repeated Barbara; "to Fate. This is thy birth-day, Sybil. Eighteen summers have flown over thy young head—eighty winters have sown their snows on mine. *Thou* hast yet to learn. Years have brought wrinkles—they

have brought wisdom likewise. To struggle with Fate, I tell thee, is to wrestle with Omnipotence. We may foresee, but not avert our destiny—what will be, shall be. This is thy eighteenth birth-day, Sybil; it is a day of fate to thee; in it occurs thy planetary hour—an hour of good or ill, according to thine actions. I have cast thy horoscope; I have watched thy natal star; it is under the baneful influence of Scorpion, and fiery Saturn sheds his lurid glance upon it. Let me see thy hand—the line of life is drawn out distinct and clear—it runs—ha!—what means that intersection? Have a care—beware, my Sybil, of thyself. Act as I tell thee, and thou art safe. I will make another trial, by the crystal bowl. Attend."

Muttering some strange words, which sounded like a spell, Barbara, with her divining rod, described a circle upon the floor; within the circle she drew other lines, from angle to angle, forming seven triangles, the bases of which constituted the seven sides of a septilateral figure. This

figure she studied intently for a few moments; she then raised her wand, and touched the owl with it. The bird unfolded its wings, and arose in flight—then slowly circled round the pendulous globe. Each time it drew nearer, until at length it touched the glassy bowl with its flapping pinions.

"Enough," ejaculated Barbara.

The bird stayed its flight, and returned to its perch.

Barbara arose. She struck the globe with her staff. The pure lymph became instantly tinged with crimson, as if blood had been commingled with it. The little serpent could be seen within, coiled up and knotted, as in the struggles of death.

"Again, I say, beware," ejaculated Barbara solemnly. "This is ominous of ill."

Sybil had sunk, from faintness, on the pallet. A knock was heard at the door.

"Who is without?" cried Barbara.

"'Tis I, Balthazar;" replied a voice.

"Thou mayst enter," answered Barbara; and an old man with a long beard, white as snow, and a costume which might be said to resemble the ephod of a Jewish High Priest, made his appearance.

"I come to tell you that there are strange women within the Priory," said the Patrico, gravely, "I have searched for you in vain," continued he, addressing Sybil; "the younger of them seems to need your assistance."

"Women!" exclaimed Barbara. "Whence come they?"

"They have ridden, I understand, from Rookwood," answered the Patrico. "They were on their way to Davenham, when they were prevented."

"From Rookwood?" echoed Sybil—"their names—did you hear their names?"

"Mowbray is the name of both;—they are a mother and a daughter—the younger is called——"

"Eleanor?" asked Sybil, with an acute foreboding of calamity.

"Eleanor is the name, assuredly," replied the Patrico, somewhat surprised.

"Gracious God! She here," exclaimed Sybil.

"Here—Eleanor Mowbray here," cried Barbara. "Within my power—not a moment is to be lost. Balthazar, hasten thee round the tents—not a man must leave his place—above all, Luke Bradley. See that these Mowbrays are detained within the Abbey. Let the bell be sounded. Quick, quick—leave this wench to me—she is not well. I have much to do. Away with thee, man, and let me know when thou hast done it." And as Balthazar departed on his mission, with a glance of triumph in her eyes, Barbara exclaimed, "Soh, no sooner hath the thought possessed me, than the means of accomplishment appear. It shall be done at once—I will tie the knot—I will untie, and then retie it. This weak wench must be nerved to the task," added she, regarding the senseless form of Sybil. "Here is that will stimulate her," opening a cupboard, and taking a small phial—"this will fortify her; and this," con-

tinued she, with a ghastly smile, laying her hand upon another vessel, "this philter shall remove her rival when all is fulfilled—this liquid shall constrain her lover to be her titled, landed husband. Ha! ha!"

CHAPTER V.

Beggar. Concert, Sir! we have musicians, too, among us. True, merry beggars, indeed, that, being within the reach of the lash for singing libellous songs at London, were fain to fly into one covey, and here they sing all our poets' ditties. They can sing anything, most tuneably, Sir, but psalms. What they may do hereafter, under a triple tree, is much expected; but they live very civilly and genteelly among us.

Spring. But, what is here—that solemn old fellow, that neither speaks of himself, or any for him?

Beggar. O, Sir, the rarest man of all: he is a prophet. See how he holds up his prognosticating nose. He is divining now.

Spring. How, a prophet?

Beggar. Yes, Sir; a cunning man, and a fortune teller; a very ancient stroller all the world over, and has travelled with gipsies: and is a Patrico.

THE MERRY BEGGARS.

IN consequence of some few words which the Sexton let fall, in the presence of the attendants, during breakfast, more perhaps by design than accident, it was speedily rumoured throughout the camp, that the redoubted Richard Turpin

was for the time its inmate. This intelligence produced some such sensation as is experienced by the inhabitants of some petty town, on the sudden arrival of a prince of the blood, a commander-in-chief, or other illustrious and distinguished personage, whose fame has been vaunted abroad amongst his fellow men by Rumour, "and her thousand tongues;" and who, like our Highwayman, has rendered himself sufficiently notorious to be an object of admiration and emulation amongst his contemporaries.

All started up at the news. The Upright Man, the chief of the crew, arose from his chair, donned his gown of state, a very ancient brocade dressing gown, filched, most probably, from the wardrobe of some strolling player, grasped his baton of office, a stout oaken truncheon, and sallied forth. The Ruffler, who found his representative in a very magnificently equipped, and by no means ill-favoured knave, whose chin was decorated with a beard as lengthy and as black as Sultan Mahmood's,

together with the dexterous Hooker, issued forth from the hovel which they termed their boozing ken, eager to catch a glimpse of the Prince of the High Toby Gloaks. The limping Palliard tore the bandages from off his mock wounds, shouldered his crutch, and trudged hastily after them. The Whip Jack unbuckled his strap, threw away his timber leg, and "leapt exulting, like the bounding roe."—"With such a sail in sight," he said, "he must heave to, like the rest." The dumb Dummerar, whose tongue had been cut out by the Algerines, suddenly found the use of it, and made the welkin ring with his shouts. Wonderful were the miracles Dick's advent wrought. The lame became suddenly active, the blind saw, and the dumb spake; nay, if truth must be told, absolutely gave utterance to "most vernacular execrations." Morts, autem morts, walking morts, dells, doxies, kinching morts, and their coes, with all the shades and grades of the Canting Crew, were assembled. There were, to use the words of Brome—

—— Stark, errant, downright beggars. Ay,
Without equivocation, statute beggars,
Couchant and passant, guardant, rampant beggars;
Current and vagrant, stockant, whippant beggars* !

Each sun-burnt varlet started from his shed —each dusky dame, with her brown, half-naked urchins, followed at his heels—each "ripe, young maiden, with the glossy eye," lingered but to sleek her raven tresses, and to arrange her straw bonnet, and then overtook the others—each wrinkled beldame hobbled as quickly after as her stiffened joints would permit; while the ancient Patrico, the priest of the Crew (who joined the couples together by the hedge-side, "with the nice custom of dead horse between†,") brought up the rear—all bent on one grand

* The Merry Beggars.

† The parties to be wedded find out a dead horse, or any other beast, and standing one on the one side, and the other on the other, the Patrico bids them live together till death do them part; and so shaking hands, the wedding dinner is kept at the next alehouse they stumble into, where the union is nothing but knocking of cannes, and the sauce, none but drunken brawles.

DEKKAR.

object—that of having a peep at the "foremost man of all this prigging world."

Dick Turpin, at the period of which we treat, was in the zenith of his reputation. His deeds were full blown; his exploits were in every man's mouth; and a heavy price was set upon his head. That he should show himself thus openly, where he might be so easily betrayed, excited no little surprise amongst the craftiest of the crew, and augured an excess of temerity on his part. Rash daring was the main feature of Turpin's character. Like our great Nelson, he knew fear only by name; and when he thus trusted himself into the hands of strangers, confident in himself and in his own resources, he felt perfectly easy as to the result. He relied also in the continuance of his good fortune, which had as yet never deserted him. Possessed of the belief, that his hour was not yet come, he cared little or nothing for any risk he might run; and though he might undoubtedly have some presentiment of the probable termination of his career, he never suffered it to militate

against his present enjoyment, which proved that he was no despicable philosopher.

Dick Turpin was the *Ultimus Romanorum*, the last of a race which (we were almost about to say we regret) is now altogether extinct. Several successors he had, it is true, but no name worthy to be recorded after his own. With him, expired the chivalrous spirit which animated successively the bosoms of so many Knights of the Road; with him, died away that passionate love of enterprise, that high spirit of devotion to the fair sex, which was first breathed upon the highway by the gay, gallant Chevalier Du Val, the Bayard of the road—*Le Filou sans peur et sans réproche*—but which was extinguished at last by the cord which tied the heroic Turpin to the remorseless tree. It were a subject well worthy of inquiry, to trace this decline and fall of the empire of the Tobymen, to its remoter causes—to ascertain the why and the wherefore, that with so many half-pay captains; so many poor curates; so many lieutenants, of both services, without hopes of promotion; so many

penny-a-liners, and fashionable novelists; so many damned dramatists, and damning critics; so many Edinburgh and Quarterly Reviewers; so many detrimental brothers, and younger sons; when there are horses to be hired, pistols to be borrowed, purses to be taken, and mails are as plentiful as partridges;—it were worth serious investigation, we repeat, to ascertain why, with the best material imaginable for a new race of highwaymen, we have none, not so much as an amateur. Why do not some of these choice spirits quit the *salons* of Pall-Mall, and take to the road; the air of the heath is more bracing and wholesome, we should conceive, than that of any "hell" whatever, and the chances of success incomparably greater? We throw out this hint, without a doubt of seeing it followed up. Probably the solution of our inquiry, may be, that the supply is greater than the demand; that, in the present state of things, embryo highwaymen may be more abundant than purses; and then, have we not the horse patrol? With such an admirably-organized system of conservation, it is

vain to anticipate a change. The highwaymen, we fear, like their Irish brothers, the Rapparees, went out with the Tories. They were averse to Reform, and eschewed Emancipation.

Lest any one should think we have overrated the pleasures of the highwayman's existence, they shall hear what "the right villainous" Jack Hall, a celebrated tobyman of his day, has got to say on the subject. "His life (the highwayman's) has, generally, the most mirth and the least care in it of any man's breathing, and all he deals for is clear profit: he has that point of good conscience, that he always sells as he buys, a good pennyworth, which is something rare, since he trades with so small a stock. The *Fence** and he are like the devil and the doctor, they live by one another; and, like traitors, 'tis best to keep each other's counsel. He has this point of honesty, that he never robs the house he frequents;" (Turpin had the same scruples respecting the Hall of Rookwood in Sir Piers's

* Receiver.

life-time;) "and perhaps pays his debts better than some others, for he holds it below the dignity of his employment to commit so ungenteel a crime as insolvency, and loves to pay nobly. He has another quality, not much amiss, that he takes no more than he has occasion for;" (Jack, we think, was a little mistaken here), "which he verifies this way; he craves no more while that lasts. He is a less nuisance in a Commonwealth than a miser, because the money he engrosses, all circulates again, which the other hoards as though 'twere only to be found again at the Day of Judgment. He is the tithe-pig of his family, which the gallows, instead of the parson, claims as its due. He has reason enough to be bold in his undertakings, for though all the world threaten him, he stands in fear of but one man in it, and that's the hangman; and with him too he is generally in Fee: however, I cannot affirm he is so valiant that he dares look any man in the face, for in that point he is now and then a little modest. Newgate may be said to be his country-house, where he

frequently lives so many months in the year, and he is not so much concerned to be carried thither for a small matter, if 'twere only for the benefit of renewing his acquaintance there. He holds a petit larceny as light as a Nun does auricular confession, though the priest has a more compassionate character than the hangman. Every man in this community is esteemed according to his particular quality, of which there are several degrees, though it is contrary often to public government; for here a man shall be valued purely for his merit, and rise by it too, though it be but to a halter, in which there is a great deal of glory in dying like a hero, and making a decent figure in the cart to the two last staves of the fifty-first Psalm *."

This, we repeat, is the plain statement of a practical man, and again we throw out the hint for adoption. All that we regret is, that we are now degenerated from the grand tobyman to the

* Memoirs of the Right Villainous John Hall, the famous and notorious robber, penned from his mouth some time before his death, 1708.

cracksman and the sneak*, about whom there are no redeeming features. How much lower the next generation of thieves will dive, it boots not to conjecture:—

> Ætas Parentum pejor avis tulit,
> Nos nequiores; mox daturos,
> Progeniem vitiosiorem.

"Cervantes laughed Spain's chivalry away," sang Byron; and if Gay did not extinguish the failing flame of our *Night* Errantry, (unlike the Robbers of Schiller, which is said to have inflamed the Saxon youth with an irrepressible mania for brigandage,) the Beggars' Opera helped not to fan the dying fire. That laugh was fatal, as laughs generally are. Macheath gave the highwayman his *coup de grace*.

The last of this race (for we must persist in maintaining that he *was* the last), Turpin, like the setting sun, threw up some parting rays of glory, and tinged the far highways with a lustre which may yet be traced like a cloud of

* Housebreakers.

dust raised by his horse's retreating heels. Unequalled in the command of his steed, the most singular feat that the whole race of the annals of horsemanship has to record, and of which we may have more to say hereafter, was achieved by him. So perfect was his jockeyship, so clever his management of the animal he mounted, so intimately acquainted was he with every cross-road in the neighbourhood of the metropolis (a book of which he constructed, and carried constantly about his person), as well as with many other parts of England, particularly the counties of Chester, York, and Lancaster, that he outstripped every pursuer, and baffled all attempts at capture. His reckless daring, his restless rapidity (for so suddenly did he change his ground, and renew his attacks in other quarters, that he seemed to be endowed with ubiquity), his bravery, his resolution, and, above all, his generosity, won for him a high reputation amongst his compatriots, and even elicited applauses from those upon whom he levied his contributions.

Beyond dispute he ruled as master of the road. His hands were, as yet, unstained with blood; he was ever prompt to check the disposition to outrage, and to prevent, as much as lay in his power, the commission of violence by his associates. Of late, since he had possessed himself of his favourite mare, black Bess, his robberies had been perpetrated with a suddenness of succession, and at distances so apparently impracticable, that the idea of all having been executed by one man, was rejected as an impossibility; and the only way of reconciling the description of the horse and rider, which tallied in each instance, was the supposition that these attacks were performed by confederates similarly mounted, and similarly accoutered.

There was, in all this, as much of the "*famæ sacra fames*," as of the "*auri*;" of the hungering after distinction, as well as of the appetite of gain. Enamoured of his vocation, Turpin delighted to hear himself designated as the flying Highwayman; and it was with raptur-

ous triumph that he found his single-handed feats attributed to a band of marauders. But this state of things could not long endure; his secret was blown; the vigilance of the police was aroused; he was tracked to his haunts; and after a number of hair-breadth 'scapes, which he only effected by miracle, or by the aid of his wonder-working mare, he reluctantly quitted the heathy hills of Bagshot, the Pampas plains of Hounslow (over which, like an archetype of the galloping Captain Head, he had so often scoured), the gorsy commons of Highgate, Hampstead, and Finchley, the marshy fields of Battersea, almost all of which he had been known to visit in a single night, and, leaving these beaten tracks to the occupation of younger and less practised hands, he bequeathed to them at the same time his own reversionary interest in the gibbets thereupon erected, and betook himself to the country.

After a journey of more or less success, our adventurer found himself at Rookwood, whither he had been invited after a grand field-day, by

its hospitable and by no means inquisitive owner. Breach of faith and good fellowship formed no part of Turpin's character; he had his lights as well as his shades; and so long as Sir Piers lived, his purse and coffers would have been free from molestation, except "so far," Dick said, "as a cog or two of dice went. My dice, you know, are longs for odd and even, a bale of bar'd cinque deuces," a pattern of which he always carried with him: beyond this, excepting a take-in at a steeple chase, Rookwood church being the mark, a "do" at a leap, or some such trifle, to which the most scrupulous could not raise an objection, Dick was all fair and above board. But when poor Sir Piers had "put on his wooden surtout," to use Dick's own expressive metaphor, his conscientious feelings evaporated into thin air. Lady Rookwood was nothing to him; there was excellent booty to be "appropriated":—

"The wise *convey* it call."

He began to look about for hands; and having

accidentally encountered his old comrades, Rust and Wilder, they were let into the business, which was imperfectly accomplished in the manner heretofore described.

To return from this digression. When Turpin presented himself at the threshold of the door, on his way to inquire after his mare, to his astonishment he found it closely invested. A cheering shout from the tawny throng, succeeded by a general clapping of hands, and attended by a buzzing susurration of applause, such as welcomes the entrance of a popular actor upon the stage, greeted the appearance of the Highwayman. At the first sight of the crowd, he was a little startled, and involuntarily sought for his pistols; but the demonstrations of admiration were too unequivocal to be for a moment mistaken; his hand was drawn from his pocket, to raise his hat from his brows.

Thunders of applause.

Turpin's external man, we have before said, was singularly prepossessing. It was especially

so in the eyes of the sex (fair we certainly cannot say upon the present occasion), amongst whom not a single dissentient voice was to be heard. All concurred in thinking him a fine fellow; could plainly read his high courage in his bearing; his good breeding in his débonnaire deportment; and his manly beauty in his extravagant red whiskers. Dick saw the effect that he produced. He was at home in a moment. Your true highwayman has ever a passion for effect. This does not desert him at the gallows; it rises superior to death itself; and has been known to influence the manner of his dangling from the gibbet! To hear some one cry, "There goes a proper handsome man," saith our previously quoted authority, Jack Hall, "somewhat ameliorates the terrible thoughts of the meagre tyrant death; and to go in a dirty shirt, were enough to save the hangman a labour, and make a man die with grief and shame of being in that deplorable condition." With a gracious smile of condescension, like a popular orator—with a look of blarney like

that of O'Connell, and of assurance like that of Hunt, he surveyed the male portion of the spectators, tipped a knowing wink at the prettiest brunettes he could select, and finally cut a sort of fling with his well-booted legs, which brought down another peal of rapturous applause.

"A rank scamp*!" cried the Upright Man; and this exclamation, however equivocal it may sound, was intended, on his part, to be highly complimentary.

"I believe ye" returned the Ruffler, stroking his chin,—"one may see that he's no half swell, by the care with which he cultivates the best gifts of nature, his whiskers. He's a rank nib†."

"Togged out to the ruffian, no doubt," said the Palliard, who was incomparably the shabbiest rascal in the corps. "Though a needy mizzler myself, I likes to see a cove vot's vel dressed. Jist twig his swell kickseys and

* A famous highwayman. † A real gentleman.

pipes *; if they ain't the thing, I'm done. Lame Harry can't dance better nor he—no, nor Jerry Juniper neither."

"I'm dumb founded," roared the Dummerar, "if he can't patter Romany † as vel as the best on us! He looks like a rum 'un."

"And a rum 'un he be, take my word for it," returned the Whip Jack, or sham sailor. "Look at his rigging—see how he flashes his sticks ‡—those are the tools to rake a three-decker. He's as clever a craft as I've seen this many a day, or I'm no judge."

The women were equally enchanted—equally eloquent in the expression of their admiration.

"What ogles!" cried a mort.

"What pins!" said an autem mort, or, married woman.

"Sharp as needles," said a dark-eyed dell, who had encountered one of the free and frolicksome glances which our Highwayman distributed so liberally amongst the petticoats.

* Breeches and boots. † Gipsy flash.

‡ How he exposes his pistols.

It was at this crisis Dick took off his hat. Cæsar betrayed his baldness.

"A thousand pities!" cried the men, compassionating his thinly covered scull, and twisting their own ringlets, glossy and luxuriant, though unconscious of Macassar. "A thousand pities that so fine a fellow should have a sconce like a cocoa nut!"

"But then his red whiskers," rejoined the women, tired of the uniformity of thick black heads of hair; "what a warmth of colouring they impart to his face, and then only look how flush they are!—how beautifully bushy they make his cheeks appear!"

Lady Baussière and the Court of the Queen of Navarre, were not more smitten with the irresistible whiskers of the Sieur de Croix.

The hawk's eye of Turpin ranged over the whole assemblage. Amidst that throng of dark faces, there was not one familiar to him.

Before him stood the Upright Man, Zoroaster (so was he called), a sturdy, stalwart rogue,

whose superior strength and stature (as has not unfrequently been the case in the infancy of governments that have risen to more importance than is likely to be the case with that of Lesser Egypt) had been the means of his elevation to his present dignified position. Zoroaster literally *fought* his way upwards, and had at first to maintain his situation by the strong arm; but he now was enabled to repose upon his hard-won laurels, to smoke "the calumet of peace," and quaff his tipple with impunity. For one of gipsy blood, he presented an unusually jovial, liquor-loving countenance—his eye was mirthful—his lip moist, as if from oft potations—his cheek mellow as an Orleans plum, which fruit, in colour and texture, it mightily resembled. Strange to say, also, for one of that lithe race, his person was heavy and hebetudinous; the consequence, no doubt, of habitual intemperance. Like Cribb, he waxed obese upon the championship. There was a kind of mock state in his carriage, as he placed

himself before Turpin, and with his left hand twisted up the tail of his dressing gown, while the right thrust his truncheon into his hip, which was infinitely diverting to the Highwayman.

Turpin's attention, however, was chiefly directed towards his neighbour, the Ruffler, in whom he recognised a well-known impostor of the day, with whose history he was sufficiently well acquainted to be able at once to identify the individual. We have before stated, that a magnificent coal-black beard decorated the chin of this singular character; but this was not all—his costume was in perfect keeping with his beard, and consisted of a very theatrical-looking tunic, upon the breast of which was embroidered, in golden wire, the Maltese cross; while over his shoulders were thrown the ample folds of a cloak of Tyrian hue. To his side was girt a long and doughty sword, which he called, in his knightly phrase, Excalibur; and upon his profuse hair, rested a hat as broad in the brim as a Spanish sombrero.

Exaggerated as this description may appear,

we can assure our readers, that it is not overdrawn; and that a counterpart of the sketch we have given of the Ruffler, certainly "strutted his hour" upon the stage of human life, and that the very ancient and discriminating City of Canterbury (to which be all honour) was his theatre of action. His history is so far curious, that it exemplifies more strongly than a thousand discourses could do, how prone we are to be governed by appearances, and how easily we may be made the dupes of a plausible impostor. Be it remembered, however, that we treat of the eighteenth century, before the march of intellect had commenced; we are much too knowing to be similarly practised upon in these enlightened times. But we will let the Knight of Malta, for such was the title assumed by the Ruffler, tell his own story in his own way hereafter; contenting ourselves with the moral precepts we have already deduced from it.

Next to the Knight of Malta, stood the Whip Jack, habited in his sailor gear—striped

shirt and dirty canvas trousers; and adjoining him was the Palliard, a loathsome tatterdemallion, his dress one heap of rags, and his discoloured skin one mass of artificial leprosy and imposthumes.

As Turpin's eye shifted from one to another of these figures, he chanced upon an individual who had been long endeavouring to arrest his attention. This personage was completely in the back-ground. All that Dick could discern of him, was a brown curly head of hair, carelessly arranged in the modern mode; a handsome, impudent, sun-freckled face, with one eye closed, and the other occupied by a broken bottle neck, through which, as a substitute for a lorgnette, the individual reconnoitred him. A cocked hat was placed in a very dégagée manner under his arm, and he held a black ebony cane in his hand, very much in the style of a "*fassionable*," as the French have it, of the year 1833. This glimpse was sufficient to satisfy Turpin. He recognised in this whimsical personage an acquaintance.

Jerry Juniper was what the classical Grose would designate a "gentleman with three outs;" and although he was not entirely without wit, nor, his associates avouched, without money, nor, certainly, in his own opinion, had that been asked, without manners; yet was he assuredly without shoes, without stockings, without shirt. This latter deficiency was made up by a voluminous cravat, tied with proportionately large bows. A jaunty pair of yellow inexpressibles, somewhat faded; a waistcoat of silver brocade, richly embroidered, somewhat tarnished and lack-lustre; a murrey-coloured velvet coat, somewhat chafed, completed the costume of this Beggar Brummell, this mendicant maccaroni!

Jerry Juniper was a character well known at the time, as a constant frequenter of all races, fairs, regattas, ship-launches, bull-baits, and prize-fights, all of which he attended, and to which he transported himself with an expedition little less remarkable than that of Turpin. You met him at Epsom, at Ascot, at Newmarket,

at Doncaster, at the Roodee of Chester, at the Curragh of Kildare. The most remote as well as the most adjacent meeting attracted him. The cock-pit was his constant haunt, and in more senses than one was he a *leg*. No opera dancer could be more agile, more nimble; scarcely, indeed, more graceful, than was Jerry, with his shoeless and stockingless feet; and the manner in which he executed a pirouette or a pas, before a line of carriages, seldom failed to procure him "golden opinions from all sorts of dames." With the ladies, it must be owned, Jerry was rather upon too easy terms; but then, perhaps, the ladies were upon too easy terms with Jerry; and if a bright-eyed fair one condescended to jest with him, what marvel if he should sometimes slightly transgress the laws of decorum. These aberrations, however, were trifling: altogether he was so well known, and knew every body else so well, that he seldom committed himself; and singular to say, could on occasions even be serious. In addition to his other faculties, no one cut a sly joke, no one trolled a merry ditty,

better than Jerry. His peculiarities, in short, were on the pleasant side, and he was a general favourite in consequence.

No sooner did Jerry perceive that he was recognised, than, after kissing his hand with the air of a petit-maître to the Highwayman, he strove to edge his way through the crowd. All his efforts were fruitless; and, tired of a situation in the rear rank, so inconsistent, he conceived, with his own importance, he had recourse to an expedient often practised with success in harlequinades, and not unfrequently in real life, where a flying leap is occasionally taken over our heads. He ran back a few yards, to give himself an impetus, returned, and, placing his hands upon the shoulders of a stalwart vagabond near to him, threw a summerset upon the broad cap of a palliard, who was so jammed in the midst that he could not have stirred to avoid the shock; thence, without pausing, he vaulted forwards, and dropped lightly upon the ground in front of Zoroaster, and immediately before the Highwayman.

Dick laughed immoderately at Jerry's manœuvre. He shook his old chum cordially by the hand, saying, in a whisper, "What the devil brings you here, Jerry?"

"I might retort, and ask you that question, Captain Turpin," replied Jerry, *sotto voce*. "It is odd to see me here, certainly—quite out of my element—quite lost amongst this canaille—this canting crew—all the fault of a pair of gipsy eyes, bright as a diamond, dark as a sloe. You comprehend—a little affair, ha! Liable to these things. Bring your ear closer, my boy—be upon your guard—keep a sharp look out—there's a devil of a reward upon your head—I won't answer for all these rascals."

"Thank you for the hint, Jerry," replied Dick, in the same tone. "I calculated my chances pretty nicely when I came here. But if I should perceive any symptoms of foul play,—any attempt to snitch or nose, amongst this pack of pedlars, I have a friend or two at hand, who won't be silent upon the occasion. Rest assured I shall have my eye upon the gnarling scoundrels—I won't be sold for nothing."

"Trust you for that," returned Juniper, with a wink. "Stay," added he, "a thought strikes me—I have a scheme in petto, which may perhaps afford you some fun, and will at all events ensure you safety during your stay."

"What is it?" asked Dick.

"Just amuse yourself with a flirtation for a moment or two with that pretty damsel, who has been casting her ogles at you for the last five minutes without success, while I effect a master stroke."

And, as Turpin, nothing loth, followed his advice, Jerry addressed himself to Zoroaster. After a little conference, accompanied by that worthy and the Knight of Malta, the trio stepped forward from the line, and approached Dick, when Juniper, assuming some such attitude as the admirable Jones, the comedian, is wont to display, delivered himself, with as much propriety of intonation as if he had been instructed in his speech by that unrivalled master of elocution, of the following address. Turpin listened with the gravity of one of the distinguished persons alluded to, at the commencement of the

present chapter, upon their receiving the freedom of a city at the hands of a Mayor and Corporation. Thus spoke Jerry:—

"Highest of High Tobymen! Rummest of rum Padders, and most scampish of Scampsmen! We, in the name of Barbara, our most Tawny Queen,—in the name of Zoroaster, our Upright Man, Dimber Damber, or Olli Campolli, by all which titles his Excellency is distinguished—in our own respective names, as High Pads and Low Pads, Rum Gills and Queer Gills, Patricos, Palliards, Priggers, Whip Jacks, and Jarkmen, from the Arch Rogue to the Needy Mizzler, fully sensible of the honour you have conferred upon us in gracing Stop-Hole Abbey with your presence; and conceiving that we can in no way evince our sense of your condescension so entirely as by offering you the freedom of our crew, together with the privileges of an Upright Man*, which you may be aware are considerable, and by creating you an honorary member of the Vagrant Club, which we have

* For an account of these, see Grose. They are much too *grose* to be set down here.

recently established; and in so doing, we would fain express the sentiments of gratification and pride which we experience in enrolling among our members the name of one who has extended the glory of roguery so widely over the land, and who has kicked up a dust upon the highways of England, with which he most effectually blinded the natives—a name which is itself a legion—of highwaymen! Awaiting, with respectful deference, the acquiescence of Captain Turpin, we beg to tender him the freedom of our crew."

"Really, gentlemen," said Turpin, who did not exactly see the drift of this harangue, "you do me a vast deal of honour. I am quite at a loss to conceive how I possibly have merited so much attention at your hands; and, indeed, I feel myself so unworthy—" here Dick received an expressive wink from Juniper, and therefore thought it prudent to alter his expression. "Could I conceive myself at all deserving of so much distinction," continued the modest speaker, "I should at once accept your very obliging offer—but——"

"None so worthy," said the Upright Man.

"Can't hear of a refusal," said the Knight of Malta.

"Refusal—impossible!" reiterated Juniper.

"No, no refusal," exclaimed a chorus of voices. "Dick Turpin must be one of us. He shall be our Dimber Damber."

"Well, gentlemen, since you are so pressing," replied Turpin, "even so be it. I *will* be your Dimber Damber."

"Bravo! bravo," cried the mob, *not* "of gentlemen."

"About it, Palls, at once," said the Knight of Malta, flourishing Excalibur. "By St. Thomas à Becket, we'll have as fine a scene as I myself ever furnished to the Canterbury lieges."

"About what?" asked Dick.

"Your matriculation," replied Jerry. "There are certain forms to be gone through, with an oath to be taken, merely a trifle—We'll have a jolly boose, when all's over. Come bing avast, my merry Palls—to the green—to the green—a Turpin!—a Turpin!—a new brother!"

"A Turpin!—a Turpin! a new brother!" echoed the crew.

"I've brought you through," said Jerry, taking advantage of the uproar that ensued, to whisper to his chum—"none of them will dare to lift a finger against you now—they are all your friends for life."

"Nevertheless," returned Turpin, "I should be glad to know what has become of Bess."

"If it's your prancer you are wanting," chirped a fluttering creature, whom Turpin recognised as Luke's groom, Grasshopper, "I gave her a fresh loaf and a stoup of stingo, as you bade me, and there she be, under yon tree, as quiet as a lamb."

"I see her," replied Turpin; "just tighten her girths, Grasshopper, and bring her after me, and thou shalt have wherewithal to chirp over thy cups at supper."

Away bounded the elfin dwarf, to execute his behest.

A loud shout now rent the skies, and presently afterwards was heard the vile scraping of a fiddle, accompanied by the tattoo of a drum. Approaching Turpin, a host of gipsies elevated

the Highwayman upon their shoulders. In this way he was carried to the centre of the green, where the long oaken table, which had once served the Franciscans for refection, was now destined for the stage of the pageant.

Upon this table three drums were placed; and Turpin was requested to seat himself on the central one. A solemn prelude, more unearthly than the incantation in the Freyschütz, was played by the orchestra of the band, conducted by the Paganini of the place, who elicited the most marvellous notes from his shell. A couple of shawms * emitted sepulchral sounds, while the hollow rolling of the drum, broke ever and anon upon the ear. The effect was prodigiously grand. During this overture, the Patrico and the Upright Man had ascended the rostrum, each taking their places, the former on the right hand of Turpin, the latter upon his left. Below them stood the Knight of Malta, with Excalibur drawn

* "The shalm, or shawm, was a wind instrument, like a pipe, with a swelling protuberance in the middle."
Earl of Northumberland's Household Book.

in his hand, and gleaming in the sunshine. On the whole, Dick was amused with what he saw, and with the novel situation in which he found himself placed. Around the table were congregated a compact mass of heads; so compact indeed, that they looked like one creature—an Argus, with each eye up-turned upon the Highwayman. The idea struck Turpin, that the restless mass of particoloured shreds and patches, of vivid hues and varied tintings, singularly, though accidentally, disposed to produce such an effect, resembled an immense tiger-moth, or it might be a turkey carpet, spread out upon the grass!

The scene was a joyous one. It was a brilliant sunshiny morning. The air, freshened and purified by the storm of the preceding night, breathed a balm upon the nerves and senses of the robber. The wooded hills were glittering in light—the brook was flowing swiftly past the edge of the verdant slope, glancing like a wreathed snake in the sunshine—its "quiet song" lost in the rude harmony of the mummers, as were the

thousand twitterings of the rejoicing birds—the rocks bared their bosoms to the sun, or were buried in deep-cast gloom—the shadows of the pillars and arches of the old walls of the priory were projected afar, while the rose-like ramifications of the magnificent marigold window were traced, as if by a pencil, upon the verdant tablet of the sod.

The overture was finished. With the appearance of the principal figures in this strange picture, the reader is already familiar. It remains only to give him some idea of the Patrico. Imagine, then, an old superannuated goat, reared upon its hind legs, and clad in a white sheet, disposed in folds like those of an ephod about its limbs, and you will have some idea of Balthazar, the Patrico. This resemblance to the animal before mentioned, was rendered the more striking, by his huge, hanging goat-like underlip, his lengthy white beard, and a sort of cap, covering his head, which was ornamented with a pair of horns, such as are to be seen in Michael Angelo's tremendous statue of Moses.

Balthazar, besides being the Patrico of the tribe, was its principal professor of divination, and had been the long-tried and faithful minister of Barbara Lovel, from whose secret instructions he was supposed to have derived much of his magical skill.

Placing a pair of spectacles upon his "prognosticating nose," and unrolling a vellum skin, upon which strange characters were written, Balthazar, turning to Turpin, thus commenced, in a solemn voice:—

> Thou who wouldst our brother be,
> Say how shall we enter thee?
> Name the name that thou wilt bear,
> Ere our livery thou wear?

"I see no reason why I should alter my designation," replied the noviciate; "but as Popes change their titles on their creation, there can be no objection to a Scampsman following so excellent an example. Let me be known as the Night Hawk."

"The Night Hawk—good," returned the hierophant, proceeding to register the name

upon the parchment. "Kneel down," continued he.

After some hesitation, Turpin complied.

"You must repeat the 'Salamon,' or oath of our creed, after my dictation," said the Patrico; and Turpin, signifying his assent by a nod, Balthazar propounded the following adjuration:—

OATH OF THE CANTING CREW.

I, Crank-Cuffin, swear to be
True to this fraternity—
That I will in all obey
Rule and order of the Lay.
Never blow the gab, or squeak;
Never snitch to bum or beak;
But religiously maintain
Authority of those who reign
Over Stop-Hole Abbey green,
Be they Tawny King or Queen.
In their cause alone will fight;
Think what they think, wrong or right;
Serve them truly, and no other,
And be faithful to my brother;
Suffer none, from far or near,
With their rights to interfere;
No strange Abram, Ruffler crack—
Hooker of another pack—
Rogue or rascal, frater, maunderer,
Irish Toyle, or other wanderer;

No dimber damber, angler, dancer,
Prig of cackler, prig of prancer;
No swigman, swaddler, clapperdudgeon;
Cadge-gloak, curtal, or curmudgeon;
No whip-jack, palliard, patrico;
No jarkman, be he high or low;
No dummerar, or romany;
No member of "*the family*;"
No ballad-basket, bouncing buffer,
Nor any other, will I suffer;
But stall-off now and for ever,
All outliers whatsoever;
And as I keep to the fore-gone,
So may help me, Salamon*!

* Perhaps the most whimsical laws that were ever prescribed to a gang of thieves, were those framed by William Holliday, one of the prigging community, who was hanged in 1695 :—

ART. I. directs—That none of his company should presume to wear shirts, upon pain of being cashiered.

II.—That none should lie in any other places than stables, empty houses, or other bulks.

III.—That they should eat nothing but what they begged, and that they should give away all the money they got by cleaning boots among one another, for the good of the fraternity.

IV.—That they should neither learn to read nor write, that he may have them the better under command.

V.—That they should appear every morning by nine, on the parade, to receive necessary orders.

VI.—That none should presume to follow the scent but such as he ordered on that party.

VII.—That if any one gave them shoes or stockings, he should convert them into money to play.

"So help me, Salamon," repeated Turpin, with emphasis.

"Zoroaster," said the Patrico to the Upright Man, "do thy part of this ceremonial."

Zoroaster obeyed; and, taking Excalibur from the Knight of Malta, bestowed a hearty thwack with the blade upon the shoulders of the kneeling Highwayman, assisting him afterwards to arise.

The inauguration was complete.

"Well," exclaimed Dick, "I'm glad it's all over. My leg feels a little stiffish—I'm not much given to kneeling—I must dance it off;" saying which, he began to shuffle upon the boards. "I tell you what," continued he, "most Reverend Patrico, that same 'Salmon' of your's has a cursed long tail—I could scarce swallow it all,

VIII.—That they should steal nothing they could not come at, for fear of bringing a scandal upon the company.

IX.—That they should not endeavour to clear themselves of vermin, by killing or eating them.

X.—That they should cant better than the Newgate birds, pick pockets without bungling, outlie a Quaker, outswear a Lord at a gaming table, and brazen out all their villainies beyond an Irishman.

and it's strange if it don't give me an indigestion. As to you, sage Zory, from the dexterity with which you flourish your sword, I should say you had practised at Court; His Majesty could scarce do the thing better, when, slapping some fat Alderman upon the shoulder, he bids him rise Sir Richard. And now, palls," added he, glancing round, " as I am one of you, let's have a boose together ere I depart, for I don't think my stay will be long in the land of Egypt."

This suggestion of Turpin was so entirely consonant to the wishes of the assemblage, that it met with universal approbation, and upon a sign from Zoroaster, some of his followers departed in search of supplies for the carousal. Zoroaster leaped from the table, and his example was followed by Turpin, and more leisurely by the Patrico.

It was rather early in the day for a drinking bout; but the canting crew were not remarkably particular. The chairs were removed, and the jingling of glasses announced the arrival of the preliminaries of the matutine

symposion. Poles, canvas, and cords, were next brought; and in almost as short space of time as one scene is substituted for another in a theatrical representation, was a tent erected. Benches, stools, and chairs, appeared with equal celerity, and the interior soon presented an appearance like that of a booth at a fair. A keg of brandy was broached, and the health of the new brother quaffed in brimmers.

Our Highwayman returned thanks. Zoroaster was in the chair, the Knight of Malta acting as croupier. A second toast was proposed—the Tawny Queen. This was drunk with a like enthusiasm, and with a like allowance of the potent spirit; but as bumpers of brandy are not to be repeated with impunity, it became evident to the President of the board that he must not repeat his toasts quite so expeditiously. To create a temporary diversion, therefore, he called for a song.

The dulcet notes of the fiddle now broke through the clamour, and in answer to the call, Jerry Juniper volunteered the following:—

JERRY JUNIPER'S CHAUNT.

In a box (1) of the Stone Jug (2) I was born,
Of a hempen widow (3) the kid forlorn.
Fake away.
And my father, as I've heard say,
Fake away,
Was a merchant of capers (4) gay,
Who cut his last fling with great applause,
(5) Nix my doll palls, fake away.

Who cut his last fling with great applause (6),
To the tune of a "hearty choke with caper sauce."
Fake away.
The knucks in quod (7) did my schoolmen play,
Fake away,
And put me up to the time of day;
Until at last there was none so knowing,
Nix my doll palls, fake away.

Until at last there was none so knowing,
No such sneaksman (8) or buzgloak (9) going,
Fake away.

(1) Cell. (2) Newgate. (3) A woman whose husband has been hanged. (4) A dancing master. (5) "Nothing, comrades, on on," supposed to be addressed by a thief to his confederates. (6) Thus Victor Hugo, in *Le Dernier Jour d'un Condamné*, makes an imprisoned felon sing

J'li ferai danser une danse
Où il n'y a pas de plancher.

(7) Thieves in prison. (8) Shoplifter. (9) Pickpocket.

Fogles (10) and fawnies (11) soon went their way,
Fake away,
To the spout (12) with the sneezers (13) in grand array,
No dummy hunter (14) had forks (15) so fly;
Nix my doll palls, fake away.

No dummy hunter had forks so fly,
No knuckler (16) so deftly could fake a cly (17),
Fake away.
No slour'd hoxter (18) my snipes (19) could stay,
Fake away.
None knap a reader (20) like me in the Lay.
Soon then I mounted in swell-street high.
Nix my doll palls, fake away.

Soon then I mounted in swell-street high
And sported my flashiest toggery, (21)
Fake away,
Firmly resolved I would make my hay,
Fake away,
While Mercury's star shed a single ray,
And ne'er was there seen such a dashing prig (22),
Nix my doll palls, fake away,

And ne'er was there seen such a dashing prig,
With my strummel faked in the newest twig (23).
Fake away.

(10) Handkerchiefs. (11) Rings. (12) To the pawnbroker. (13) Snuff boxes. (14) Pickpocket. (15) The two fore-fingers used in picking a pocket. (16) Pickpocket. (17) Pick a pocket. (18) No inside coat pocket, buttoned up. (19) Scissars. (20) Steal a pocket book. (21) Best-made clothes. (22) Thief. (23) With my hair dressed in the first fashion.

With my fawnied famms (24), and my onions gay (25),
Fake away;
My thimble of ridge (26), and my driz kemesa (27);
All my togs were so niblike (28) and splash,
Nix my doll palls, fake away.

All my togs were so niblike and splash,
Readily the queer screens I then could smash (29):
Fake away,
But my nuttiest blowen (30), one fine day,
Fake away,
To the beaks (31) did her fancy man betray,
And thus was I bowled out at last (32).
Nix my doll palls, fake away.

And thus was I bowled out at last,
And into the Jug for a lag was cast (33);
Fake away,
But I slipped my darbies (34) one morn in May,
Fake away,
And gave to the dubsman (35) a holiday.
And here I am palls, merry and free,
A regular rollocking Romany (36).
Nix my doll palls, fake away.

Much laughter and applause rewarded Jerry's attempt to please; and though the meaning of

(24) With several rings on my hands. (25) Seals. (26) Gold watch. (27) Laced shirt. (28) Gentlemanlike. (29) Easily then forged notes could I pass. (30) Favourite mistress. (31) Police. (32) Taken at length. (33) Cast for transportation. (34) Fetters. (35) Turnkey. (36) Gipsy.

his chaunt, even with the aid and abetment of the numerous notes which we have appended to it, may not be quite obvious to our readers, we can assure them that it was perfectly intelligible to the Canting Crew. Jerry was now entitled to a call; and happening, at the moment, to meet the fine dark eyes of a sentimental gipsy, one of that better class of mendicants who wandered about the country with a guitar at his back, his election fell upon him. The youth, without prelude, struck up a

GIPSY SERENADE*.

Merry maid, merry maid, wilt thou wander with me?
We will roam through the forest, the meadow, and lea;
We will haunt the sunny bowers, and when day begins to flee,
Our couch shall be the ferny brake, our canopy the tree.
Merry maid, merry maid, come and wander with me?
No life like the gipsy's, so joyous and free!

Merry maid, merry maid, though a roving life be our's,
We will laugh away the laughing and quickly fleeting hours;
Our hearts are free, as is the free and open sky above,
And we know what tamer souls know not, how lovers *ought* to love.
Merry maid, merry maid, come and wander with me?
No life like the gipsy's, so joyous and free!

* The words of this song have been published, accompanied with music, by Mr. Alexander Roche.

Zoroaster now removed the pipe from his upright lips to intimate his intention of proposing a toast.

An universal knocking of knuckles by the knucklers*, was followed by profound silence. The sage spoke:—

"The City of Canterbury, palls," said he; "and may it never want a Knight of Malta."

The toast was pledged with much laughter, and in many bumpers.

The Knight, upon whom all eyes were turned, rose "with stately bearing and majestic motion," to return thanks.

"I return you an infinitude of thanks, brother palls," said he, glancing round the assemblage; and bowing to the president, "and to you, most Upright Zory, for the honour you have done me in associating my name with that City. Believe me, I sincerely appreciate the compliment, and echo the sentiment from the bottom of my soul. I trust it never *will* want a Knight

* Pickpockets.

of Malta. In return for your consideration, but a poor one you will say, you shall have a ditty, which I composed upon the occasion of my pilgrimage to that city, and which I have thought proper to name after myself:"—

THE KNIGHT OF MALTA,

A Canterbury Tale.

Come list to me, and you shall have, without a hem or haw, sirs,
A Canterbury pilgrimage, much better than old Chaucer's.
'Tis of a hoax I once played off, upon that city clever,
The memory of which, I hope, will stick to it for ever.
With my coal black beard, and purple cloak,
jack-boots, and broad-brimmed castor,
Hey ho for the Knight of Malta!

To execute my purpose, in the first place you must know, sirs,
My locks I let hang down my neck—my beard and whiskers grow, sirs;
A purple cloak I next clapped on, a sword tagged to my side, sirs,
And mounted on a charger black, I to the town did ride, sirs,
With my coal-black beard, &c.

Two pages were there by my side, upon two little ponies,
Decked out in scarlet uniform, as spruce as maccaronies;
Caparisoned my charger was, as grandly as his master,
And o'er my long and curly locks I wore a broad-brimmed castor.
With my coal-black beard, &c.

The people all flocked forth, amazed to see a man so hairy,
Oh! such a sight had ne'er before been seen in Canterbury!
My flowing robe, my flowing beard, my horse with flowing mane, sirs!
They stared—the days of chivalry, they thought, were come again, sirs!
With my coal-black beard, &c.

I told them a long rigmarole romance, that did not halt a
Jot, that they beheld in me a real Knight of Malta!
Tom à Becket had I sworn I was, that saint and martyr hallowed,
I doubt not just as readily the bait they would have swallowed.
With my coal-black beard, &c.

I rode about, and speechified, and everybody gullied,
The tavern keepers diddled, and the magistracy bullied:
Like puppets were the townsfolk led in that show they call a raree;
The Gotham sages were a joke to those of Canterbury.
With my coal-black beard, &c.

The theatre I next engaged, where I addressed the crowd, sirs,
And on retrenchment, and reform, I spouted long, and loud, sirs,
On tithes, and on taxation, I enlarged with skill and zeal, sirs,
Who so able as a Malta Knight, the malt tax to repeal, sirs.
With my coal-black beard, &c.

As a candidate I then stepped forth to represent their city,
And my non-election to that place was certainly a pity;
For surely I the fittest was, and very proper very,
To represent the wisdom and the wit of Canterbury.
With my coal-black beard, &c.

At the trial of some smugglers next, one thing I rather queer did,
And the justices upon the bench I literally *bearded;*
For I swore that I some casks did see, though proved as clear as day, sirs,
That I happened at the time to be some fifty miles away, sirs,
With my coal-black beard, &c.

This last assertion, I must own, was somewhat of a blunder,
And for perjury indicted they compelled me to knock under;
To my prosperous career this slight error put a stop, sirs,
And thus *crossed* the Knight of Malta was at length obliged to *hop*, sirs.
With his coal-black beard, and purple cloak,
jack-boots, and broad-brimmed castor,
Good bye to the Knight of Malta!

The Knight sat down amidst the general plaudits of the company.

The party, meanwhile, had been increased, by the arrival of Luke and the Sexton. The former, who was in no mood for revelry, refused to comply with his grandsire's solicitation to enter, and remained sullenly at the door, with his arms folded, and his eyes fixed upon Turpin, whose movements he commanded through the canvas aperture. The Sexton walked up to Dick, who was seated at the post of honour, and clapping him upon the shoulder, congratulated

him upon the comfortable position in which he found him.

"Ha! ha! Are you there, my old Death's Head on a Mop Stick?" said Turpin, with a laugh. "Ain't we merry mumpers, eh? Keeping it up in style. Sit down, old Noah—make yourself comfortable, Methusalem."

"What say you to a drop of as fine old Nantz as you ever tasted in your life, old cove?" said Zoroaster.

"Say," returned Peter, "that I have no sort of objection to it, provided you will all pledge my toast."

"That I will, were it old Ruffin himself, shouted Turpin."

"Here's to the three leg'd mare," cried Peter. "To the tree that bears fruit all the year round, and that yet has neither bark nor branch. You won't refuse that toast, Captain Turpin?"

"Not I," answered Dick; "I owe the gallows no grudge. If, as Jerry's song says, I must have a hearty choke and caper sauce for my breakfast one of these fine mornings, it shall never be said

that I fell to my meal without appetite, or neglected saying grace before it. Gentlemen, here's Peter Bradley's toast, The Scragging Post. The three leg'd mare, with three times three."

Appropriate as this sentiment was, it did not appear to be so inviting to the party as might have been anticipated, and the shouts soon died away.

"They like not the thoughts of the gallows," said Turpin to Peter. "More fools they. A mere bugbear to frighten children, believe me, and never yet alarmed a brave man. The gallows, pshaw! One can but die once, and what signifies it how, so that it be over quickly. I think no more of the last leap into eternity than of clearing a five-barred gate. A rope's-end for it! So let us be merry, and make the most of our time, and that's true philosophy. I know you can throw off a rum chaunt," added he, turning to Peter. "I heard you sing last night, at the Hall. Troll us a stave, my antediluvian file, and in the mean time tip me a gage of fogus*, Jerry;

* A pipe of tobacco.

and if that's a bowl of huckle-my-butt* you are brewing, Sir William," added he, addressing the Knight of Malta, "you may send me a jorum thereof at your convenience."

Jerry handed the highwayman a pipe, together with a tumbler of the beverage which the Knight had prepared, which he pronounced excellent; and while the huge bowl was passed round to the company, a prelude of shawms announced that Peter was ready to break into song.

Accordingly, after the symphony was ended, accompanied at intervals by a single instrument, Peter began his melody, in a key so high, that the utmost exertion of the shawm-blower failed to approach its altitudes. The burthen of his minstrelsy was—

THE MANDRAKE†.

The Mandrake grows 'neath the gallows-tree,
And rank and green are its leaves to see;

* A drink composed of beer, eggs, and brandy.

† The imaginary malignant and fatal influence of this plant is frequently alluded to by our elder dramatists; and

Green and rank, as the grass that waves
Over the unctuous earth of graves,
And though all around it be bleak and bare,
Freely the Mandrake flourisheth there.
Maranatha—Anathema!
Dread is the curse of Mandragora!
Euthanasy!—

At the foot of the gibbet the Mandrake springs,
Just where the creaking carcass swings;

with one of the greatest of them, Webster (as might be expected from a charnel Muse, that revels like a ghoul in graves and sepulchres, and rakes up hideous and revolting lore), it is an especial favourite for illustration. But none have plunged so deeply into the disquisition of the supposititious virtues of the Mandrake, as the learned and profound Sir Thomas Browne. He tears up the fable root and branch. Concerning the danger ensuing from eradication of the Mandrake, he thus writeth:—"The last assertion is, that there follows a hazard of life to them that pull it up, that some evil fate pursues them, and that they live not very long hereafter. Therefore the attempt hereof among the ancients was not in ordinary way; but, as Pliny informeth, when they intended to take up the root of this plant, they took the wind thereof, and with a sword describing three circles about it, they digged it up, looking toward the West. A conceit not only injurious unto truth and confutable by daily experience, but somewhat derogatory unto the Providence of God; that is, not only to impose so destructive a quality on any plant, but to conceive a vegetable whose parts are so useful unto many, should, in the only taking up, prove mortal unto any. This were to introduce a second forbidden fruit, and enhance the first malediction, making it not only mortal for Adam to taste the one, but capital for his posterity to eradicate, or dig up the other."—*Vulgar Errors*, Book ii., c. vi.

Some have thought it engendered
From the fat that drops from the bones of the dead;
Some have thought it a human thing;
But this is a vain imagining.
Maranatha—Anathema!
Dread is the curse of Mandragora!
Euthanasy!

A charnel leaf doth the Mandrake wear,
A charnel fruit doth the Mandrake bear;
Yet none like the Mandrake hath such great power,
Such virtue resides not in herb or flower;
Aconite, hemlock, or moonshade, I ween,
None hath a poison so subtle and keen.
Maranatha—Anathema!
Dread is the curse of Mandragora!
Euthanasy!

And whether the Mandrake be create
Flesh with the flower incorporate,
I know not; yet, if from the earth 'tis rent,
Shrieks and groans from the root are sent;
Shrieks and groans, and a sweat like gore
Oozes, and drops from the clammy core.
Maranatha—Anathema!
Dread is the curse of Mandragora!
Euthanasy!

Whoso gathereth the Mandrake, shall surely die;
Blood for blood is his destiny.
Some who have plucked it have died with groans,
Like to the Mandrake's expiring moans;
Some have died raving, and some beside—
With penitent prayers—but *all* have died.
Jesu! save us, by night and day!
From the terrible death of Mandragora!
Euthanasy!

"A queer chaunt that," said Zoroaster, coughing loudly, in token of his disapprobation.

"Not much to my taste," quoth the Knight of Malta. "We like something more sprightly in Canterbury."

"Nor to mine," added Jerry; "don't think it's likely to have an encore. 'Pon my soul, Dick, you must give us something yourself, or we shall never cry Euthanasy at the Triple Tree."

"With all my heart," replied Turpin, "you shall have—but what do I see, my friend Sir Luke? devil take my tongue, Luke Bradley I mean. What, ho! Luke—nay, nay, man, no shrinking—stand forward—I've a word or two to say to you. We must have a hob-a-nob glass together, for old acquaintance sake. Nay, no airs, man; dammee you're not a lord yet, nor a baronet either, though I do hold your title in my pocket; never look glum at me. It won't pay. I'm one of the canting crew now—no man may sneer at me with impunity, eh, Zory? Ha! ha! —here's a glass of Nantz; we'll have a bottle

of bene carlo* when you are master of your own. Make ready there, you gut scrapers, you shawm shavers, I'll put your lungs in play for you, presently. In the meantime—charge, palls, charge—a toast, a toast—health and prosperity to Sir Luke Rookwood. I see you are surprised—this, gentlemen, is Sir Luke Rookwood, some-while Luke Bradley, heir to the house of that name, not ten miles distant from this. Say, shall we not drink a bumper to his health?"

Astonishment prevailed amongst the crew. Luke himself had been taken by surprise. When Turpin had discovered him at the door of the tent, and summoned him to appear, he had most reluctantly complied with the request; but when, in a half bantering vein, Dick had begun to rally him upon his pretensions, he would most gladly have retreated, had it been in his power. It was then too late. He felt he must stand the ordeal. The disclosure was now made. Every eye was fixed upon him with a look of inquiry.

* Port.

Zoroaster took his everlasting pipe from his mouth.

"This ain't true, sure*ly*?" asked the perplexed sage.

"He has said it," replied Luke; "I may not deny it."

This was sufficient. There was a wild hubbub of delight amongst the crew, for Luke was a favourite with all.

"Sir Luke Rookwood!" cried Jerry Juniper, who liked a title as much as Tommy Moore is said to doat upon a lord, "Upon my soul I sincerely congratulate you; devilish fortunate fellow. Always cursed unlucky myself. I could never find out my own father, unless it were one Monsieur des Capriolles, a French dancing master, and *he* never left anything behind him, that I could hear of, except a broken kit, and a hempen widow. Sir Luke Rookwood, we shall do ourselves the pleasure of drinking your health and prosperity."

Fresh bumpers, and immense cheering.

Silence being in a measure restored, Zoroaster claimed Turpin's promise of a song.

"True, true," replied Dick, "I have not forgotten it. Stand to your bows, my hearties."

THE GAME OF HIGH TOBY.

Now Oliver (1) puts his black nightcap on,
And every star its glim (2) is hiding,
And forth to the heath is the Scampsman (3) gone,
His matchless cherry-black (4) prancer riding;
Merrily over the common he flies,
Fast and free as the rush of rocket,
His crape-covered vizard drawn over his eyes,
His tol (5) by his side, and his pops (6) in his pocket.

CHORUS.

Then who can name
So merry a game,
As the game of all games—High Toby (7)?

The traveller hears him, away! away!
Over the wide wide heath he scurries;
He heeds not the thunderbolt summons to stay,
But ever the faster and faster he hurries.
But what daisy-cutter can match that black tit?
He is caught—he must "stand and deliver;"
Then out with the dummy (8), and off with the bit (9),
Oh! the game of High Toby for ever!

Then who can name
So merry a game,
As the game of all games—High Toby?

(1) The moon. (2) Light. (3) Highwayman. (4) "Cherry-coloured—black; there being black cherries as well as red." GROSE. (5) Sword. (6) Pistols. (7) Highway robbery. (8) Pocket book. (9) Money.

Believe me there is not a game my brave boys,
To compare with the game of High Toby;
No rapture can equal the Tobyman's joys,
To blue devils blue plumbs (10) give the go-bye;
And what if, at length, boys, he come to the Crap (11),
Even rack punch has *some* bitter in it,
For the Mare-with-three-legs (12), boys, I care not a rap,
'Twill be over in less than a minute!

GRAND CHORUS.

Then hip, hurrah!
Fling care away!
Hurrah for the game of High Toby!

"And now, gentlemen," said Dick, who began to feel the influence of these morning cups, "I vote that we adjourn. Believe me, I shall always bear in mind that I am a brother of your band; Sir Luke and I must have a little chat together, ere I take my leave. Adieu."

And taking Luke by the arm, he walked out of the tent; Peter Bradley rose, and followed them.

At the door they found the dwarfish Grasshopper, with Black Bess. Rewarding the urchin

(10) Bullets. (11) The gallows. (12) Ditto.

for his trouble, and slipping the bridle of his mare over his hand, Turpin continued his walk over the green. For a few minutes he seemed to be lost in rumination.

"I tell you what, Sir Luke," said he, "I should like to do a generous thing, and make you a present of this bit of paper. But one ought not to throw away one's luck, you know—there is a tide in the affairs of thieves, as the player coves say, which must be taken at the flood, or else——but no matter. Your old dad, Sir Piers (God help him!), had the gingerbread, *that* I know; he was, as we say, a regular rhinocerical cull. You won't feel a few thousands, especially at starting; and besides there are two others, Rust and Wilder, who row in the same boat with me, and must therefore come in for their share of the reg'lars. All this considered, you can't complain, I think, if I ask five thousand for it. That old harridan, Lady Rookwood, offered me nearly as much."

"I will not talk to you of fairness," said Luke; "I will not say that document belongs of right

to me. It fell by accident into your hands. Having possessed yourself of it, I blame you not that you dispose of it to the best advantage. I must, perforce, agree to your terms."

"Oh no," replied Dick, "it's quite optional; Lady Rookwood will give as much, and make no mouths about it. So ho, lass! What makes Bess prick her ears in that fashion—Ha—Carriage wheels in the distance! that jade knows the sound as well as I do. I'll just see what it's like!—you will have ten minutes for reflection. Who knows if I may not have come in for a good thing here?"

At that instant a carriage passed the angle of a rock some three hundred yards distant, and was seen slowly ascending the hill side. Eager as a hawk after his quarry, Turpin dashed after it.

In vain the Sexton, whom he nearly overthrew in his career, called after him to halt. He sped like a bolt from the bow.

"May the devil break his neck," cried Peter, as he saw him dash through the brook, "could he not let them alone?"

"This must not be," said Luke; "know you whose carriage it is?"

"It is a shrine that holds the jewel that should be dearest in thine eyes," returned Peter; "haste, and arrest the spoiler's hand."

"Whom dost thou mean?" asked Luke.

"Eleanor Mowbray," replied Peter. "She is there—to the rescue—away."

"Eleanor Mowbray!" echoed Luke—and Sybil——

At this instant a pistol-shot was heard.

"Wilt thou let murder be done, and upon thy cousin?" cried Peter, with a bitter look. "Thou art not what I took thee for."

Luke answered not, but swift as a hound from the leash, darted in the direction of the carriage.

END OF VOL. II.

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